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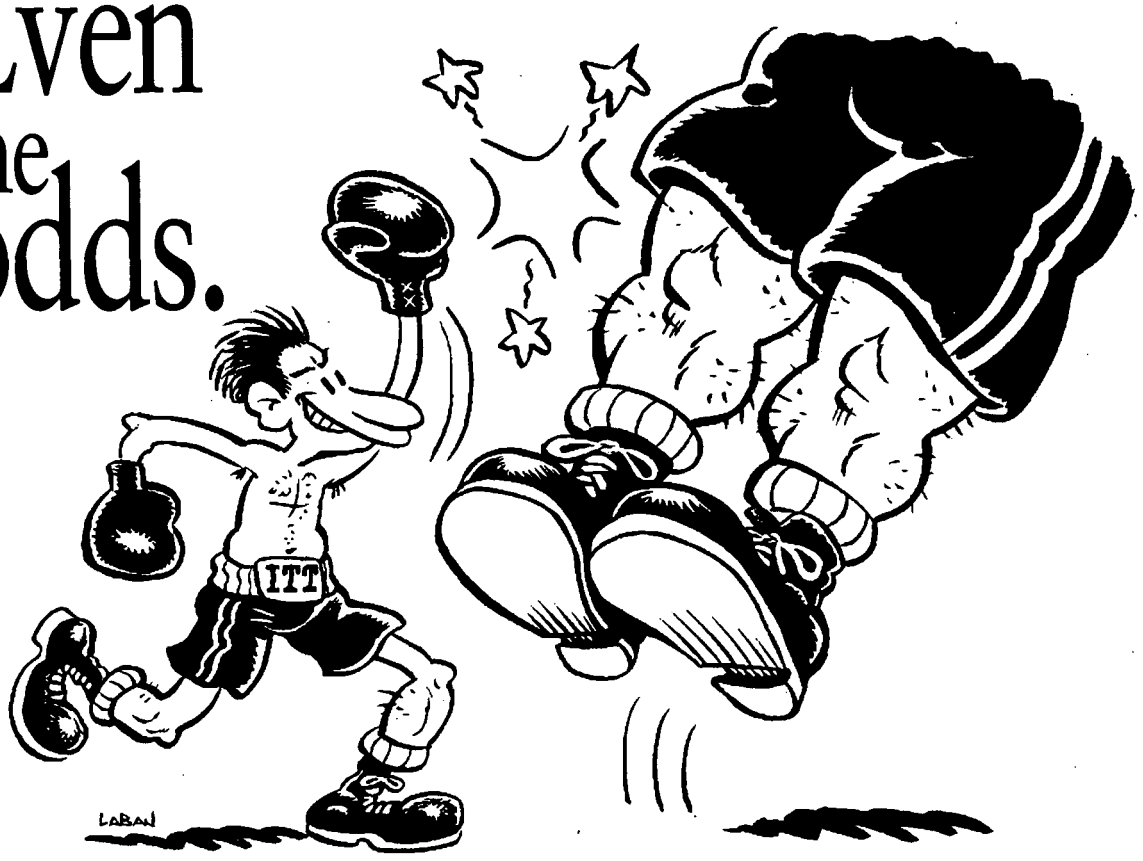

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Letters

Misplaced Missiles

Michelle Cottle's "May the Force Be With You" (September) pronounced a fact that may either be an error or a revelation. Ms. Cottle stated: "The footage of U.S. Patriot interceptors exploding in the night sky over Baghdad. . . ." I saw Patriot missiles exploding over Riyadh, Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and other places; however, if they exploded over Baghdad, then Saddam Hussein must have purchased a few Patriot missiles. Perhaps American arms merchants were true to their creed as described by Undershaft, George Bernard Shaw's protagonist in *Major Barbara*: "To give arms to all men who offer an honest price for them."

KIM BRUNO
via CompuServe

Michelle Cottle responds: *My humblest apologies to any readers who lost sleep over the thought of Saddam Hussein amassing his own stockpile of Patriots. To this publication's knowledge, neither the Pentagon nor Raytheon has broken into the Iraqi market. And despite the chaotic state of affairs in the Persian Gulf, I have been assured that at no time has the United States ever defended Baghdad with Patriot missiles. (The explosions that television audiences saw over Baghdad were from Iraqi antiaircraft fire.)*

Snakes of a Different Color

Charles Bailey's article in the September issue titled "Snakes in the Grass" describes the manufacturing of a virtual grass-roots movement by "slick corporate lobbyists," but omits the earnest nonprofit interest groups that are easier to love.

In 1990, Planned Parenthood of Suffolk County (New York) launched a defensive letter-to-the-editor campaign in which a Planned Parenthood "staff member writes a timely response to a letter-to-the-editor and sends it to you for signing." This was to counter a large number of letters from people who expressed antichoice views.

It is so difficult to resist the notion that being right will justify any behavior that will spread the word. Something we learned in Sunday school, I suppose.

TED M. HOPES
Glendale, AZ

Clinton's Dilemma

Charles Peters writes in his September piece about Bill Clinton ("Why I'll Vote for Bill Clinton—and Why I Still Worry About Him") that he is concerned with Clinton's apparent disinterest in the activities of the people he has chosen to run his administration.

Though I am as far as possible from being a Clinton fan, I find Peters unreasonable in blaming him for a situation centuries of lawmakers have wished on the presidency by the profligate passage of laws—more for their own advantage than in the national interest—that the administration is bound to execute.

I do not believe the framers of the Constitution intended it to deal with more than the union between the separate states and their common defense against foreign powers; if the Congress had so limited its lawmaking—ceding to the states and their people as much self-government as the Tenth Amendment implies—the president and administration would not be smothered in trivia the states could very well handle for themselves.

But politicians create issues to get themselves elected, and legislators make laws to keep themselves in office.

ERNEST F. SMALL
Orange Park, FL

Circumstantial Evidence

Shame on you for implying that because G. David Schine married and had six children he was not gay ("Tilting at Windmills," September). I belong to an all-gay men's service organization. Approximately half of our members who are aged 40 and above have been married, and most of them have children. While some younger gay men and lesbians have children, marry, or both, this is clearly no longer the norm. Nevertheless, those who reached adulthood in the 1950s and 1960s (and I suppose earlier) did marry. Your "inconvenient facts" tell me nothing about Mr. Schine's sexual preference.

WILLIAM TAYLOR
Atlanta, GA

Layoffs and Tradeoffs

In his review of John Kenneth Galbraith's *The Good Society* (September), Paul Krugman writes that "it has been a long time since any substantial number of economists believed in a significant long-run trade-off between unemployment and inflation." Oh? As a non-economist whose training in these matters comes from media pundits and financial advice columns, I hear this trade-off cited daily as if it were a law of nature. As a middle-class professional with a retirement portfolio, I am advised constantly that unemployment below 5 percent is bad news for me. I'm asked to support welfare "reform" on the premise that everybody should work; while on another page of the paper I'm told I should be pleased that, as a matter of policy, 5 percent of the labor force will not be allowed to.

STEVEN HELMLING
Newark, DE

No Place Like Home

Amanda Ripley's well-written and compelling piece in the September issue ("Stay at Home, Moms") provides a perfect example for the argument that post-1960s, ultra-liberalism is doomed. She leaves out the possibility (some would say "the fact") that teenage girls in unpleasant family surroundings, realizing that the state will provide them with an apartment of their own and enough money to scrape by if they become pregnant and deliver a child, may well violate certain age-old taboos against premarital sex and childbearing out of wedlock. I am not saying teenagers become mothers by calculation, *because* of the government-provided goodies available to them; it is rather that the generous nature of the safety net available

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to them, especially when their home life is unpleasant, may well attenuate any inborn or cultural restraints on their sexual behavior.

Ripley writes: "Last year, Massachusetts implemented the live-at-home requirement as part of Governor William Weld's welfare overhaul. Since implementation, the number of teens receiving welfare in Massachusetts has dropped significantly. For now, the state has no idea why." "The state" may have no idea why, but anyone who was ever a screwed-up teenager has a pretty damned good idea why.

This "live-at-home requirement" seems like a miracle, a truly good idea stumbled upon by politicians. With this thing in place, young women might have an incentive to resort to more traditional means of escape from a bad scene: get an education, get a job, or get married.

PETER D. JOHNSON JR.

Through Rain, Sleet, And Red Tape

An item in your September issue was certainly misleading at best ("Tilting at Windmills"). First of all, both unionized and non-union employees are governed by the national agreement between the unions and the Postal Service. Wages, conditions of employment, hours of work, vacations, pensions and other matters are determined by the agreement (contract). Only when the matter for a grievance violates the contract can one be filed.

As to the mail not being delivered on time, I do not believe that happens often. I have contact with many people in many states who certainly do not find that to be true, nor do I.

THELMA E. WRIGHT
Salina, KS

One Strike, You're Out

You've got to be kidding! "Fines, confiscation of property ... community service" for those who are guilty of nonviolent crimes? ("Tilting at Windmills," July/Aug.) Does that include those bums who bilk old people out of their life's savings in confidence games? As Barney Frank once said, those are the last people on earth we want out in the community. Why not try breaking their legs and throwing them in overcrowded prisons?

SIDNEY GENDIN
Ypsilanti, MI

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What about those **tidbits** that **outraged** you?

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Tilting at Windmills

BY CHARLES PETERS

A New Soulmate • The Cali Cartel as a Buy • More on Mrs. Astor • A Comeback for Ferries • A Kind Word for Dick Morris

THERE WAS A MOMENT IN LATE September when Bill Clinton seemed to be becoming too involved in answering Dole's charges—e.g., that he is a liberal—and Dick Morris complained to a *Washington Post* reporter that Clinton was forgetting to be presidential as he got "absorbed in the daily give and take of campaign rhetoric." It reminded me that, much as we all like to make fun of Morris, much of his advice was sound. One of Clinton's greatest weaknesses is his tendency to become defensive, a tendency that unfortunately is shared by his wife. There is no question in my mind, that after Morris became his guru, Clinton showed less of this defensiveness than he had in his first two years in the White House and that he was more presidential, more a man the American people could begin to be proud of.

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AFTER THE GUN BATTLE BETWEEN Israeli troops and Palestinian police in September, Jimmy Carter found a gentle way of expressing my opinion of Benjamin Netanyahu: "He has not followed up in any sort of enthusiastic, accommodating, or generous way in building on what Rabin and Peres have left for him."

Rabin was tough, but finally he wanted peace more than he wanted to be tough. Netanyahu seems just to want to be tough.

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WE HAVE CRITICIZED THE INCREASing conservatism of *The Washington Post*'s Business section and of its leading columnist, James K. Glassman. But even we weren't prepared for Glassman's glowing endorsement of Philip Morris in the *Post*'s September 29 edition.

"Would I buy Philip Morris if I owned individual stocks? Yes, but my fascination transcends a mere lust for money. The attraction of Philip Morris is intellectual and emotional. It's a stock that has everything: huge profits, sin, death, politics, fierce legal battles and superb management."

Glassman praised the company for averaging a 25.6 annual return since 1981 "despite lawsuits and the heavy hand of government."

Jesus, Jim, that "heavy hand" has been trying to protect its citizens from lung cancer and heart disease. Those lawsuits are by people who are dying because they used the products of that wonderful company. Thank goodness the Cali cartel isn't listed on The New York Stock Exchange, for you would surely put it on your "buy" list.

As a mutual fund investor, you could be forgiven for inadvertently acquiring shares in a fund that owned shares in a tobacco company, but to recommend the conscious purchase of stock in a company that deals in death is beyond the pale. The owners and editors of the *Post* should be embarrassed to publish such advice. But of course they run cigarette ads, don't they?

• • • • • • • •

SHOOTING THE GOOD GUYS SEEMS to have become a habit. In addition to Rabin, another recent example comes from Burundi, where the Roman Catholic Archbishop Joachim Ruhuna stood up to the murderers on both sides, the Hutu as well as his fellow Tutsi: "Let me warn the killers and those who sent them: your crimes are the shame of humanity."

On a Monday afternoon in late September Ruhuna's car was attacked and burned. His body hasn't been found, but according to a report by a correspondent of *Time* magazine, "The killers almost surely threw the archbishop's body into the nearby Mubarazi river, the way they have disposed of countless other victims."

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IF YOU'RE A FAN OF FERRIES, AS I AM, you'll be delighted to know they're making a big comeback around New York City. Commuters are discovering that ferries are more appealing than the crowded trains and buses, and traffic-clogged highways, bridges, and tunnels. According to *The New York Times*, one passenger said of the ferry ride, "It puts you in a state of tranquility, and you need peace of mind when going to work."

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IF YOU THINK PUBLIC EMPLOYEES are underpaid, take a look at Prince George's County, Md., where at least 10 employees make over $96,000. Or consider Fairfax County, Va., where 24 employees make more than $100,000 each.

But at least, you assume, these well-paid executives are willing to work long hours to serve the public. No, not at all. If they work overtime in Fairfax County, they're entitled to "comp time," compensatory leave equal to their overtime.

But they're all paupers compared to the Federal Reserve Board in Washington, where 72 employees make more than $125,000. The chief maintenance officer, who in an era of less exalted titles might have been called the head janitor, is paid $163,800.

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MY FELLOW LIBERALS, MOST ESPEcially those who are members of, or enjoy the electoral support of, pub-

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lic employees' unions, tend to argue that all public employees are underpaid. Some are, but many are not. The distinction is important.

So is the distinction between outstanding and average performers among civil servants. But the people urging that this distinction be made—so that, for example, in downsizing we make sure to keep the best—tend to be conservative Republicans like Rep. John Mica. Those who resist preference for the outstanding tend to be liberal Democrats like Rep. Carrie Meek, who says the proposed preference for the outstanding "will reduce the number of African Americans in the federal workforce."

If I were an African-American civil servant I would be insulted by the congresswoman's lack of confidence in my ability.

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JAY LENO'S RESPONSE TO THE CAMpaign ad in which Liddy Dole extolls her husband's character—"when Bob Dole commits to something, he sticks with it"—was a classic. Said Leno, with a puzzled expression on his face, "Now, she's Bob's *second* wife."

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ANOTHER CHAPTER IN THE SHAMEful history of the CIA has been written in Iraq with the failed plot against Saddam. We abandoned scores if not hundreds of Kurdish agents to their deaths. I came to Washington just after the Bay of Pigs disaster, which did not make the CIA look very competent. When I expressed curiosity as to whether the agency was worth having around, I was told, "Of course, look what they did in Iran and Guatemala." In Iran they installed the Shah—an accomplishment that history has not chosen to honor. In Guatemala, the story was even worse: They overthrew a democratically elected government and installed a military junta that has for more than 40 years demonstrated a pronounced proclivity for murder and mayhem in its dedicated suppression of human rights.

Recently a presidential advisory panel confirmed, according to *The Washington Post*, "that the CIA employed multiple informants in the Guatemalan government and military forces over the past decade who agency officials *knew* [italics supplied] were involved in assassinations, torture, kidnappings and murder in that country."

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AFTER CHIDING THE STYLES SECtion of *The New York Times* in our May issue for running so many photographs of Brooke Astor, we hoped the editors of that great paper would restrain their social sycophancy for a while. But we should have known the *Monthly* is no match for the forces of snobbery. Another picture of Mrs. Astor appeared in the paper's Sunday, September 22 edition.

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ALTHOUGH MY HEART is usually liberal, as regular readers know, I sometimes see merit in conservative positions. Not assuming virtue in every view of the public employees' unions is one example. Crime is another. I believe in being tough on people whose behavior threatens others with violence and am disturbed when the law lets them off easily.

When we asked the folks at ABC if they saw anything wrong with what they had done, they said no.

• In West Virginia recently a man who had been convicted 11 times for drunken driving was let off with just two to six years in jail on a plea bargain which also resulted in the dropping of felony charges against him for threatening people with guns.

• In the District of Columbia, the case of a hit and run driver who had severely injured a student had not even begun to be investigated by the D.C. police six months after the commission of the crime—despite the fact that the driver's license plate number had been taken down by witnesses and matched with a car by the victim's husband, who conducted his own search of the Department of Motor Vehicle's records.

• In Oakton, Va., a teacher who had received a death threat from a student was told by the school authorities that the student would remain in the school but that the teacher could be transferred. The teacher had intervened upon seeing the student, according to *The Washington Post*, "kicking lockers, throwing books, and acting in an abusive way to another teacher." Oakton faculty members told the *Post*, "weapons, drugs, and student violence are becoming an increasing safety hazard for teachers."

This is a case where I'm 100 percent with the teachers' unions who are trying to protect their members from violence. According to a Department of Education survey, more than 1 in 10 public school teachers have been physically assaulted at some time by students. We need good people to choose public school teaching as a career and to stick with it. How can we expect them to do so when we don't give them the chance to work in safety?

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I'VE FOUND A NEW SOULMATE. HER name is Mary Ann Lindley, a columnist for the *Tallahassee Democrat*. "Once I saw a greeting card that said 'How to be a happy lawyer,'" began one of her recent columns. "Inside in tiny print was 'Quit.'"

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"THE INTERNAL REVENUE SERvice's grand ambition to allow taxpayers to file returns directly from their personal computers to IRS centers via the Internet has gone off line for the foreseeable future," reports Ralph Vartabedian in the *Los Angeles Times*. The decision to pull the plug on electronic tax filing came after the General Accounting Office found the

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Cyberfile system had 49 physical and electronic security weaknesses. Among them, "the central computer for Cyberfile was located in a dusty subbasement of the U.S. Department of Agriculture that is subject to flooding." In addition, "the computer room had doors with locks installed backwards, meaning they could be easily breached, and sprinkler pipes hung so low that workers had to squat."

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WHY DO WE PAY THE COST OF PROtecting Middle East oil when we get only 10 percent of the oil we use from there? This sensible question was asked recently in an op-ed piece in *The New York Times* by Lawrence Korb, a former assistant secretary of defense who is now at the Brookings Institution. Western Europe gets 30 percent of its oil from the Middle East; Japan, 50 percent. So why don't they provide the military force or at least reimburse us for their proportionate share of the expense of providing it for them?

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THERE ARE SOME NOBLE WORDS IN the constitution of the state of New York, put there in 1938 as the result of the efforts of that little giant Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia, words that should guide all of us in thinking about how to implement and change, if necessary, the welfare reform law: "The aid, care, and support of the needy are public concerns and should be provided by the state. . . ." As David Stout wrote recently in *The New York Times*, "La Guardia believed that government had a sacred duty to protect the unfortunate," a sacred duty we shouldn't forget as we try, I think rightly, to end the subsidized idleness that is demoralizing so many recipients of welfare. Everyone who can work, should work. But not if we can't make sure that there are jobs for them and care for the children while they work. And we must take care of those who truly cannot work. Welfare reform, as Michelle Cottle points out in this issue, can be a great triumph, but it can also be a great disaster if we don't carry it out wisely.

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GAMBLING CASINOS WITH DAYCARE? OF course. We may not provide it for a welfare mother who wants to work, but if she wants to cash in her welfare check for gambling chips, the casinos will provide her with bargain daycare where, according to

October 21 *Newsweek* the kids can frolic among "mountains of Lego and Duplo blocks," "a maze of tunnels and slides," television screens aglow with kiddie classics, and "a kid's cafe for snacking."

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A RECENT POLL SEEMS TO ANSWER A question that has sorely troubled American education in recent decades: Should we teach Hispanic children in Spanish or English? A poll of 600 randomly selected Hispanic parents conducted by the Center for Equal Opportunity found that 81 percent wanted their children's academic courses to be taught in English.

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ONE OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OF bureaucracy that must be fought constantly is the tendency to focus inward—on matters such as turf battles, office size, parking spaces, and promotions—instead of on serving the public. A recent example comes from New York City, where a team of city council staff, according to a story by Vivian S. Toy of *The New York Times*, "drafted 173 letters with hypothetical complaints, questions or offers of help" which they then asked citizens to sign and send to 21 different city agencies.

After six weeks 120 of the letters had not been answered. Two agencies—the Human Resources Administration was one—ignored every single letter they received, including offers to donate items such as books and Little League uniforms.

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FOUR HUNDRED AND FIFTY MILLION dollars will have been spent in campaign advertising spots during the fall election season, estimates Larry Sabato, a political scientist at the University of Virginia. Ninety percent of them are negative, a threefold increase over the 1960s.

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SHOULD A MAJOR TELEVISION NEWS show run a one-sided segment on either Clinton or Dole as its sole political coverage the night before the election? Of course not. But ABC's Peter Jennings did something similar the night before the Federal Reserve Board's crucial September 24 vote on whether to raise interest rates.

The Fed had to decide if there was a sufficient threat of inflation to justify raising rates even though doing so might put the economy on the road to recession. Strong pressure to raise rates was coming from many conservative economists, including, according to one leak from inside the Fed itself, eight of the Fed's 12 regional banks' presidents. Their main argument was that rising employment was causing wages to rise, which would in turn produce high prices. Those of us who disagreed pointed to periods in

Roman Genn

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our history when full employment and low inflation had co-existed, and pointed out that today, foreign competition and weak unions are both compelling factors in restraining wages and prices.

ABC chose to present just one side on the eve of the Fed meeting. "The reason the Fed may raise rates," said Jennings as he introduced a report by Bob Jamieson from St. Louis, "is its concern about inflation, especially in the work place."

Jamieson's report focused entirely on the shortage of workers in the St. Louis area and the high wages and bonuses that were being offered—$2 above the minimum wage for fast food workers to $20 an hour for carpenters and $60,000 a year for engineers—concluding:

"When employers across such varied industries have to raise wages just to find workers, they'll no doubt soon raise prices. That's why all those Help Wanted signs could mean higher inflation is on the way."

The trouble with this report is that it's not true of the rest of the country. Elsewhere, wages are not rising in a way that threatens inflation. So on the eve of the Fed's big decision, ABC told a story that was not only one-sided, but was not true for the country as a whole.

When we asked the folks at ABC if they saw anything wrong with what they had done, they said no.

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DID YOU KNOW THAT THE RATE OF driver death is highest for men 80 and older? Their record is even worse than males in the 16-to-24 group, who most of us are accustomed to considering the most dangerous. Why not require annual road tests and physical exams for men who want to drive after their 80th birthdays? Ten years from now—as I stand in line waiting to be tested—I'll be kicking myself for having said this, but it does seem to make sense.

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THE LIST OF EGOMANIACS I HAVE known is long. I have spent most of my adult life among the celebrity stars of journalism. My checkered past also includes brief careers in the theater and politics, both worlds where self-effacement is not the rule. Of the varieties of egomaniacs, I like the politicians best. The reason is that they have learned to listen, if only to get elected. Bill Clinton is an example. He is one of the great listeners of the Western world. It is a strength that I'm confident will play an important role in what I expect to be his re-election this month. ●

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Reforming Welfare Reform

Clinton signed the bill. Now conservatives and liberals alike have work to do if we want it to succeed

BY MICHELLE COTTLE

With his signing of the welfare bill, President Clinton may have deflated a political football, but he set off a flurry of fortune telling. The bill's proponents are predicting a sunny future with discontented, parasitic welfare moms transformed into a thrifty working class with renewed self-respect. Its outraged opponents prophesy that the new system will give rise to bands of children roaming the streets and enclaves of homeless huddling together in tent cities.

Regardless of which group you fall into, at this stage, most of us agree that the current system has to change. After years of dumping money into entitlement programs that act as a trap as much as a safety net, a message needs to be sent about what our society owes its members and what it expects from them—a message not just for those caught in the system, but also for people like "Gwenn Jackson," a young working mother I met in 1992.

Gwenn was in an English class I was teaching at a community college in Vicksburg, Mississippi. Around 25 years old, with two kids, no husband, and at least one job, Gwenn was taking my class for one reason only: to complete her degree so she could find a better job. Every morning she would drag into class and collapse into a chair, clearly exhausted. She occasionally arrived late or missed class because of a sick child. But she made up the work and often asked for additional help. Gwenn clearly wanted to do well, but reading even a simple sentence was difficult for her. Grading her homework was a chore, and at the end of the term, I put off looking at her final paper until last. Four years later, hers is the only essay I recall.

Asked to address a topic of personal importance, Gwenn chose to write about the welfare system. Now, this woman had grown up poor, black, and essentially uneducated in rural Mississippi. She had no interest in eligibility requirements, state matching funds, or benefit levels. She herself wasn't on welfare. Gwenn's concerns were about the "fairness" of a system that let her neighbors sit home waiting for their benefit checks while she split her time between work and school. At one point, she asked straight out: Why should I work hard when the other women I know sit home all day with their kids? I don't get to spend time with my kids, and I have to pay someone to stay with them.

Truth be told, only a small percentage of welfare recipients are out to cheat the system. (Only 30 percent stay on the rolls for more than two consecutive years.) Most recipients honestly believe they can't find a job that will let them support their families. But while a tragic few cannot survive on their own, many more simply don't like the jobs they can find or are unwilling to endure the frustrations of the workplace. Of course, none of this meant a thing to Gwenn. She had no special skills or connections that made it easier for her to find decent employment, nor was she immune to abusive or patronizing employers. Still, she had chosen work over welfare because she believed providing for her family was her responsibility. Sadly, she was getting just the opposite message from a government she thought rewarded those who opted not to work. Whatever the essay's grammatical flaws, Gwenn's response was clear: She was confused, she was angry, and she was discouraged.

For people like Gwenn, the welfare reform bill sends the long-awaited signal that—while it may be tough—working for your livelihood is the right thing to do. It's also a signal to Gwenn's neighbors that waiting at home for your monthly check is no longer an option. Now, having said all that, I want to clarify something: The bill itself is a dangerously flawed vehicle for delivering this message. It contains a handful

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of provisions that are downright nasty, and many more that will help or harm depending on how they're administered. (I cringe to hear pundits rave about the "radical experimentation" now possible with states designing their own programs. The phrase should be applied to laboratory chemicals, not people's lives.) The stakes are high, and although the bill contains several loopholes that will limit its impact for a few years, some of our society's most vulnerable members stand to get hurt if significant contradictions within the law aren't addressed now.

Money's the Problem

First off, we need to decide: Is this bill intended to help balance the budget or to develop a more effective welfare program? (Right now, no one even knows what to call the thing. The two popular titles for H.R. 3734 are the Budget Reconciliation bill and the Welfare Reform bill.) The law's supporters insist these goals are not mutually exclusive, but a look at some of the major provisions suggests we will have to choose between having our cake and eating it.

The legislation provides $13 billion less than states will need over the next six years to meet their work requirements.

Two of the legislation's harshest measures, and the ones that provide most of its $54 billion in savings, have little to do with constructive reform: a $24 billion cut in food stamps over the next six years and the slashing of benefits to legal immigrants. The food stamp restrictions are tight, and poor families without dependent children will find their benefits cut off after just three months unless they are working at least 20 hours a week. The decision to cut benefits to legal immigrants already settled in the United States is equally ugly. Making sure future immigrants don't arrive expecting handouts is one thing, but how do you explain the new policy to an elderly widow who, although her husband worked in this country for more than 30 years, just lost her Supplemental Security benefits?

Whenever President Clinton talks about "fixing" the bill, he points to these two measures. But any significant reversal or abatement will require restoring tens of billions in spending cuts, sending the bill's "budget resolution" pretensions right out the window.

More budget problems will emerge as states scramble to move welfare recipients into the workforce. The new law requires that states use the federal block grants that replace the Aid to Families with Dependent Children entitlements to place 25 percent of their adult welfare recipients into jobs or job-training programs by next year, and 50 percent by 2002. It also cuts benefits to adults who do not find work after two years and places a five-year cap on lifetime assistance. But moving people into jobs costs money—money not appropriated, predictably enough, in a bill geared to help balance the budget. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that by 2002, when half of states' welfare recipients must be working, a minimum outlay of $6,000 per job slot will be needed just to cover things like locating work, providing for child care, and arranging for transportation. (Most job creation is occurring in the suburbs, not the traditional stomping grounds of welfare recipients.) Multiply these figures by 2 million—50 percent of the adults currently on welfare—and you have yourself a budget crunch. By CBO estimates, the legislation provides $13 billion less than states will need over the next six years to meet their work requirements—excluding child care costs.

The obvious next question is, "Where will all these jobs come from?" Not having provided for a public works program, Congress and the administration presumably expect the natural job creation process to absorb the additional workers. At the bill's signing ceremony, President Clinton issued a national challenge, calling on businesses, nonprofits, and government agencies to accept their "responsibility" and make a place for welfare recipients: "Now that we are saying with this bill we expect work, we have to make sure the people have a chance to go to work."

But in an age where corporations are sending jobs overseas as fast as they can and stock value is the name of the game, should we expect corporate America to embrace the welfare masses, many of whom are unskilled, uneducated, and unprepared for the work world? Michigan Governor John Engler expected just that in 1991 when he cut general assistance (aid to childless adults living below the poverty line) to 80,000 people. A University of Michigan study of the program reveals that, by 1993, only 20 percent of former recipients had found steady employment, with another 17 percent relying on odd jobs for survival. Many turned

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to other assistance programs, friends, or relatives, says the study's lead author, Sandra Danziger. "And about one in eight told us they had none of these things—no job, no disability payments, no family support, nothing." "Making a place" for welfare recipients, it seems, is not business's top priority. As Robert Jones, president and CEO of the National Alliance of Business, stated in a September 1 interview with *The New York Times*: "Business is not in the business of providing jobs for welfare recipients." (Incidentally, how accommodating do you think companies will be when the Federal Reserve Board gets antsy about the efforts to slash unemployment and ups interest rates?)

To sweeten the idea of social responsibility, the administration is considering financial incentives to the tune of $3.4 billion for businesses that employ welfare recipients. One proposal would give companies a $5,000 tax credit for hiring a recipient with significant "barriers to employment" (e.g., drug problems, depression, illiteracy). Studies of previous wage-subsidy efforts, however, reveal that such incentives often serve as a warning flag to employers who may be disinclined to hire welfare recipients.

Even with the government dangling financial carrots in front of companies, in many cases the jobs just aren't there. An August 25 article by *New York Times* reporter Alan Finder illustrates this point in terms of New York City's welfare population: "There are 3.3 million jobs in New York City, and since the city's recession ended late in 1992 there has been a net gain of 88,000 jobs. At that slow rate of growth, if every job gained by the local economy were given to a New Yorker now on welfare, it would take 21 years for all 470,000 adults to be absorbed into the economy." Toss into this mix the hundreds of thousands of job-hunters not on welfare, and the small percentage of emerging jobs for which welfare recipients are qualified, and you begin to see the scope of the challenge.

The obvious answer to the shortage seems to be a public works program for those who cannot find employment elsewhere. "If this new system is to work, you have to be talking about some state public-job creation," asserts Wendell Primus, a former Clinton welfare policy official who recently resigned over the new law. (Primus's office had published an analysis that concluded the legislation does not provide states with enough resources to meet work requirements.) "The private sector is not going to be able to absorb these welfare recipients in any great magnitude."

But a public jobs program comes with all of the same funding challenges as a regular placement program, plus you have to come up with the cash to pay participants' salaries. At a September 10 speech to the Southern Governors Association, President Clinton announced, "[T]here's not enough money around to create enough public jobs to solve this welfare problem." Well, not exactly. AmeriCorps estimates that its costs for putting an individual to work in a community service job are around $15,000. At this rate, we're looking at a cost of $15 billion to put 25 percent of current welfare recipients to work; $30 billion to handle 50 percent. The costs aren't prohibitive; we've just decided to use the money for other things.

Having recipients perform community service work in exchange for their benefits is a slightly less expensive option and could help people adjust to a work environment. But with this type of program in particular, questions arise about what sorts of jobs to create. Putting people into make-work positions does little to increase their self-worth or prepare them for life in the private sector. The Comprehensive Employment Training Act of the 1970s was frequently criticized for hiring people into titular positions such as "Community Development Aide."

On the flip side, the creation of meaningful community service work—paid or unpaid—raises the specter of labor union protests. The threat of a large pool of unskilled workers driving wage levels down makes unions nervous, as does the thought of massive job displacement. Union backlash has already surfaced in response to New York City's workfare system, which requires welfare recipients to work for their benefits in state-provided positions until they find other employment. But because many of the workfare tasks (assisting the Parks Department with maintenance, doing clerical work, cleaning public buildings) have traditionally been performed by union employees, many labor leaders have denounced the program as "a union-busting tactic," and a wedge to initiate "the destruction of the labor movement." This September, a plan to have workfare participants clean city buses and subways (with the equivalent union positions eliminated by attrition) prompted the head of the city's largest municipal union to call for a moratorium on further expansion of workfare. As unions organize to confront such perceived threats, states planning similar workfare programs will need to prepare for conflict—and compromise.

In New York's case, many labor leaders are calling for the city to expand the training element of workfare, then hire more participants into unionized positions. (Otherwise, union members argue, workfare participants will remain a permanent, unskilled, exploited underclass—that takes away union jobs.)

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Other union leaders have requested that workfare participants be allowed to count time spent in the program toward the official point system used to determine who's hired for civil service jobs.

Of course, the training aspects of works programs are important in their own right. In addition to helping participants gain job-specific skills, training can provide people with a basic grasp of "the soft skills"—how to deal with office politics, customer service, workplace etiquette—that help them survive the daily work frustrations and retain their positions. As New York's workfare experiment has shown, keeping people on the job is often tougher than getting them there. *The New York Times* reports that, since the program was launched in 1994, more than 60 percent of its 123,000 participants have dropped out. Fewer than 10 percent of them reportedly made the leap into private-sector employment; the city does not know if the remainder found legitimate work, obtained under-the-table jobs, turned to other assistance programs, started dealing drugs, or simply left the area.

Welfare-to-work programs in Florida, Missouri, and other states report similar difficulties keeping welfare recipients at work, whether the jobs are state-provided or in the private sector. Well over 50 percent of the participants hired through a Kansas City, Mo., placement program left their jobs within 16 months. Recipients' inability to perform their duties is not the problem, say employers, so much as is their unfamiliarity with workplace culture and protocol. The head of one Kansas City welfare reform agency told *The New York Times* that increasingly employers are saying: Forget wage subsidies, "send us people who get to work on time, can read and follow instructions, and want to stay on the job." Or as Peter Cove, founder of a private New York placement firm for welfare recipients, told *The Washington Post*: "People do not lose jobs because of what they don't know, but because they don't fit in."

Who Makes the Call?

For welfare agency workers, the reform bill represents a significant increase in workloads. Under the new system, states will be allowed to exempt 20 percent of their welfare recipients from work requirements. So in addition to screening applicants and calculating benefits, caseworkers will now be making delicate decisions about which applicants have extenuating family circumstances, which are trying "hard enough" to find jobs, which are downright unemployable. This means more counseling, monitoring, and analysis of individual clients. Caseworkers will also need to track cases more closely to determine if recipients are complying with the provision requiring them to be working or involved in a jobs-training program within two years of going on welfare. Many of the provisions, such as requiring teenage mothers to attend school and live at home with their parents to receive benefits, will require a high degree of both discretion and leg work. Welfare agencies will not only need to confirm that teen mothers are complying with these requirements, but also make decisions about which teens have extenuating circumstances (such as abusive parents) and should be excused from them. University of California at Los Angeles Professor Joel Handler, author of *The Poverty of Welfare Reform*, worries that some of the requirements are simply unenforceable: "One provision requires single mothers to identify their children's fathers before they can receive benefits. If the mother says she doesn't know, how do you prove that? Or what if she doesn't want to say because she's trying to get an abusive man out of her life—how do you verify that?"

Pat Martak, a lead caseworker with the Silver Spring welfare office in Montgomery County, Md., worries about the burden the new system will place on agency workers. On the morning of October 1, the day the new regulations officially go into effect, Martak sits in her tiny cubicle, surrounded by case files. She motions to a tall stack of green transmittals from Maryland's Department of Human Resources outlining the new system. "There are drastic changes coming, and caseworkers will have to do a lot more intensive case management," she says. "Nobody really knows how things will turn out."

What Martak does know is that the state and county have no plans to expand the Silver Spring staff. "In fact," she says, "they've been seriously talking about downsizing around here." Currently, Silver Spring's 30 caseworkers handle the cash assistance (AFDC and general assistance), food stamps, and medical assistance requests of close to 400 families apiece, processing 65 to 70 new files each month. They are primarily responsible for what Martak calls the "technical" aspects of case management, helping applicants fill out forms and navigating the various computer programs used to process and track cases. Under the new system, a segment of Silver Spring caseworkers will team up with social workers and representatives from other agencies to help "manage [cash assistance] recipients to success," making sure they understand and comply with the new work and lifestyle requirements. The remainder of caseworkers will take over management of all food stamp and medical assistance requests. Martak says agency administrators realize that workers will

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"have their hands full" dealing with the increased responsibilities. "But the states are all on block grants now," she says with a smile, "and they're all trying to save money."

The situation is even grimmer in the District of Columbia, where the computer systems are antiquated and workers handle up to 500 cases each, processing up to 30 new applicants every week. "There are not enough hours in the day to deal with all the work we already have," says caseworker Deborah Farrior, who's been with the District's East Capitol office for five years. "We see clients all day long, one behind the other, interviewing, writing down the interviews almost verbatim, signing 5,000 forms, inputting all of the information into the computer. This is an endless task, and it is a thankless task," says Farrior, noting that all too often she and her co-workers are on the receiving end of clients' frustrations. "People are in here screaming and yelling all day. All of our centers have metal detectors and security guards. It is not a safe environment." While Farrior expects the new system to increase caseworkers' responsibilities (and client hostility), she has little hope of the department investing more in either staff or equipment. "There's no money for it. We haven't even had raises in five years."

Unlike the federal government's plan, Wisconsin's reform efforts began by dramatically *increasing* welfare spending.

With the new role states expect caseworkers to assume, piling work onto the shoulders of already overloaded employees is a step in exactly the wrong direction. Before adding to workers' responsibilities, states must make certain that agencies are adequately staffed with workers who are prepared—and qualified—to handle the job. While an advanced degree in social work isn't requisite, agencies need to attract more capable, concerned people to these positions, not drive out the ones they already have. Unfortunately, widespread reports of incompetence in agencies that use social workers and case managers—such as the recent child welfare department scandals in Washington state and New York—suggest the government has trouble finding enough good people to administer existing programs. Changing this situation will require an aggressive recruitment strategy and taking concrete steps to reverse the image—and the too-common reality—of public servants as underpaid and unappreciated.

Seeing opportunity amid the chaos, the business community is offering to shoulder the burden for states. Privatization of welfare management has emerged as the solution du jour, with players of all shapes, sizes, and industries jockeying for a piece of this potentially multi-billion dollar market. Lockheed Martin, IBM, and Electronic Data Systems are just a few of the companies bidding to oversee state programs. In theory, companies would be able to handle caseloads more efficiently and offer employees bonuses for placing welfare clients in jobs. But one Lockheed executive's remark that the company is "approaching this marketplace the way [it] approach[es] all other marketplaces" raises the question of whether businesses can stay focused on poor families' best interests when profits are directly linked to cutting costs. After all, some of these same companies helped boost the unemployment rate with massive layoffs in the name of shareholder value—or at the very least cheered as their executive colleagues made "the tough cuts." With financial incentives and fewer bureaucratic hurdles, private-sector companies could almost certainly help states reduce welfare rolls, but at what cost to the poor?

Who's Watching the Kids?

With single mothers composing 90 percent of all AFDC recipients, child care merits its own "problem" category. First, welfare agencies face many of the same discretionary questions that crop up in regard to basic benefits. The new law allows mothers with preschool children to be exempted from work requirements if it's proven that they cannot obtain adequate, accessible child care. Who will decide what is "adequate"? What if the mother disagrees? States certainly can't ask parents to go to work without making sure that quality child care will be available.

This brings us back to the money issue. "Child care is a market good like food or motor oil," says New York University professor Lawrence Mead, who published a case study of Wisconsin's highly touted welfare reforms. "If you spend the money, the providers are available." With this in mind, an additional $3.5 billion for day care is bundled in the new legislation, but it's questionable whether this will be enough to compensate for an influx of welfare mothers into the workforce. Even without the new work requirements in

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place, many agencies don't have the funds to meet existing demand. Maryland's Montgomery County has been experiencing "a crisis in child care subsidies" since 1992, says the county's director of child care services, Deborah Shephard. Unable to handle the growing need, the county closed its waiting list last year when the number of children awaiting subsidies reached 2,100. Once the new requirements kick in, the additional working poor requesting aid will make the financial situation even tougher.

Shephard estimates that the agency's average costs for placing a child in day care run around $400 a month. (Parents also pay a portion of the expenses.) At this rate, the county would need an additional $370,000 a month to handle the demand created by putting a quarter of its 3,700 AFDC parents to work (assuming every recipient requested aid for only one child). Using this same criteria, just over $400 million a month would take care of 25 percent of the nationwide AFDC population. Granted, child care costs vary by region, and expenses may not run as high in Montgomery County, Alabama. But the Montgomery County, Md., department of child care services has the benefit of some of the best funding in the nation. Its financial problems bode ill for less affluent areas.

The child care issues surrounding welfare reform also highlight the need for our society to address the financial and emotional dilemmas faced by all working parents, not just those we're trying to move off government assistance. Our culture has no problem sending the conflicting messages to poor parents that 1.) you need to work for a living but that 2.) your children are suffering from a lack of parental time and attention. Where we fall short is in providing alternative work and day care opportunities to ease the burden on working—and especially single—parents.

The Hope

Proponents of the law dismiss all the financial nay-saying, arguing that shrinking caseloads will free up enough resources to handle the additional costs of work programs, child care, and so on. And this big reduction, conservatives predict, will take place as soon as people realize their free ride is ending. To support this theory, proponents point to caseload reductions in areas already experimenting with welfare-to-work. Virginia, which last year set eligibility requirements even tougher than the new federal mandates, reports a 14 percent drop in caseloads. Similarly, Maryland reports an 8 percent fall.

By far, the most celebrated instance of savings through declining caseloads is Wisconsin's welfare program, which focuses on moving people into private sector jobs, but provides state-created positions for those who cannot find employment elsewhere. Since reform efforts began in 1987, Wisconsin boasts a 47 percent decline in its rolls, which Mead estimates has resulted in a $68 million savings. Among conservatives, Wisconsin Republican Governor Tommy Thompson is lauded as The Man With The Plan. Unfortunately, Wisconsin is not New York or California or Tennessee. Mead admits that much of the $68 million is simply the result of the state's strong economy and low unemployment, which automatically make for smaller caseloads. He also points out that the initial money Wisconsin used to jump start its programs was available because the state was experiencing a significant economic recovery at that time. (Similarly, the Department of Health and Human Services's Michael Kharfen attributes Virginia's and Maryland's caseload declines to the states' strong economies and high rates of job growth.) Other states may not be in a position to replicate Wisconsin's efforts. In an October 1 interview with C-Span, Joel Sanders, the head of welfare reform for Alabama, said that his agencies simply cannot afford a jobs program like Wisconsin's. District of Columbia welfare officials have also expressed concern over how the reforms will affect their community, where the growth of low-skilled jobs is slow and the number of people on welfare remains high.

Even more importantly, unlike the federal government's plan, Wisconsin began by dramatically increasing welfare spending—something the budget reconciliation fans keep failing to mention. "Wisconsin is the best argument around for the liberals," says Paul Offner, a former welfare policy expert with Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan's staff and now commissioner of healthcare finance for the District of Columbia. "It shows what you can accomplish if you spend money on welfare programs. Tommy Thompson has always said welfare reform will cost more money—particularly up front." Mead's study supports Offner's argument, concluding that Wisconsin's program has worked largely because the state has invested in both the computer infrastructure and the personnel required to provide recipients with a high degree of individual attention—a luxury agencies with overwhelming caseloads or poor funding may not have.

Also, it bears mentioning that Wisconsin's 47 percent caseload drop is far from evenly distributed. While around half of the state's 72 counties have seen over a 70 percent drop since 1987, caseloads have declined only 21 percent in the Milwaukee area—

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where just over 50 percent of the state's welfare population lives.

Don't Panic—Yet

Fortunately, not all of these problems have to be dealt with this week—or even this year. The new legislation contains a number of loopholes that take most of the bite out of the reforms for the next few years. First are the numerous waivers that the administration has granted to 43 states. Allowing states extra time and flexibility in meeting federal mandates, the waivers have spurred accusations that President Clinton wants to "weaken welfare reform before it has a chance to begin." In reality, the extensions could help states overcome what Mead sees as a potentially fatal flaw in the bill: "It demands such high levels of actual employment [within such a short time frame] that the requirements could prove totally unadministratable."

Second, states receive credit for any drop in their caseloads not based solely on a tightening of eligibility requirements. In other words, these aren't "work participation" quotas so much as they're "getting people off the rolls" quotas. So if 15 percent of a state's welfare recipients simply drop out of the system—turning to other assistance programs, undocumented employment, or even crime—that leaves only 10 percent that the state must place. Also, with the economy holding strong, all but two states have already experienced caseload declines that can be applied to their 1997 targets.

Loophole No. 3: Although the new law places a five-year lifetime cap on cash benefits to any welfare family, the restrictions apply only to the money states receive in their federal block grants. Most programs are jointly funded by the federal and state governments, so once a welfare recipient reaches the five-year federal cut-off, a state can simply pay the person's benefits using state money, and apply federal funds to eligible, incoming recipients.

Eventually, however, these shell games will cease to work, either because of the progressive caseload reductions mandated or because of a downturn in the economy. Primus warns, "The full ramifications of this bill will come home to roost the next time we start going into a recession." At that point, the real bill for the reforms will come due.

The Challenge

This could be a historic moment for our society. We have the potential to change a system that encouraged dependence into one that emphasizes self-reliance. Neither liberals nor conservatives can argue with this goal. To succeed, however, will require both heart and money. While it's immoral to support a system that keeps millions of families dependent on handouts, it would be equally wrong to demand that millions of poor parents go to work without our making every effort to ensure that the necessary jobs, training, and support services are available. Helping people into jobs should be our first priority, not cutting caseloads. The idea that every person who drops off the rolls has overcome poverty is absurd. Just look at the South: With some of the nation's lowest benefit levels, Southern states have traditionally maintained smaller welfare rolls than other regions, as well as some of the nation's highest poverty rates.

While it may sound simplistic (and hopelessly liberal), the key to a successful welfare-to-work program is more, not less, investment. Just ask Governor Thompson. With the proper resources, states could retain an adequate number of caseworkers to match welfare recipients with jobs that allowed recipients to support their families. Agencies could have people available to coach recipients on the "soft skills" needed for job retention, and every eligible applicant could obtain safe, accessible child care. Perhaps most importantly, a public works program could be created for those unable to obtain regular employment. We've done it before: During the 1930s, the WPA put over 8.5 million people to work.

Of course, making all of this happen means we will need more and better-equipped welfare agents to help "manage recipients to success." Yes, this requires additional investment, but it also calls for more smart, talented people to get involved in public service. This magazine has long bemoaned the fact that America's best and brightest would rather slave away in the basement of some corporate law firm than be labeled a government bureaucrat. Obviously, money has a lot to do with this, but so does our society's disdain for public service. While we're asking welfare recipients to change their views on personal responsibility, most of us could stand to re-examine our views on public responsibility.

Above all, we need to focus on developing the most effective reform measures possible—on reworking this bill so it can help the people it's meant to help—then worry about making the programs as cost-effective as possible. Postponing our budget balancing for a couple of years seems a small price to pay for helping millions of poor Americans become self-sufficient. Besides, if conservatives are right, once we get the right kind of systems in place, we'll more than recoup our costs over the long haul. ●

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Tidbits & Outrages

The Thin Blue Leotard

CIA director John Deutch has been pushing for a $10 million "fitness and wellness center" to boost agency morale. According to Citizens Against Government Waste, Deutch has also advocated, among other things, "bridge and yoga rooms," and "lunchtime square dances."

God Skipped Town Before They Could Slap Him With A Summons

A 16-year-old boy's parents filed a $35 million lawsuit in Newport News, Virginia after their son inhaled a computer cleaner to get high, drove into a lake, and drowned. They sued K-Mart, which sold the product, the engineering firms that designed the lake, and the builders of the road off which he drove.

Remember the Famous Battle of Sausalito?

The California Senate voted 32 to 1 in August to request that the federal government reimburse the state for its Civil War expenses. The state wants an inflation-adjusted amount of $82 million.

The Good News Is, He's Retiring

photo by Melanie Griffin

Oregon Rep. Wes Cooley saluting Sierra Club protesters on the Capitol lawn.

It's Right There in the Sentencing Guidelines—Two Years Per Roll

A homeless man in Florida got 40 years in prison for stealing 22 rolls of toilet paper.

Wherefore Art Thou Mario?

Cokie Roberts discussing Democratic convention speeches on "Good Morning America": "But with these guys (Jesse Jackson and Mario Cuomo) coming, it was kind of like your young love coming back and oh, I remember when I was, you know, young and in love with this guy who was totally unacceptable, and I did the right thing by marrying the right guy—but gee, he was kind of cute." —*Quote courtesy of the Media Research Center*

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Privacy Wrongs

Corporations have more right to your data than you do

BY JAMES RULE AND LAWRENCE HUNTER

BEVERLY DENNIS IS AN OHIO GRANDmother and bona fide American consumer. Several years ago, she completed a questionnaire for the Metromail Corp., a direct marketing firm, in order to get free product samples. In her responses, she disclosed things like her income level, date of birth, the fact that she was divorced, her interest in physical fitness, and choice of "personal care" products, according to a lawsuit she is filing.

Dennis got more than free product samples. She got a "sexually graphic and threatening" letter from a convicted rapist in a Texas penitentiary. It turned out he knew quite a lot about Dennis, thanks to her questionnaire. He had written his highly personalized letter after being assigned the task of entering data from the questionnaire by a Metromail subcontractor. The use of inmates to answer 800-number calls, process consumer information, and even act as telemarketers, it seems, is widespread. "If it said [on the circular] it would be sent to a prison," Dennis later said in an interview, "I certainly wouldn't have filled it out."

Dennis is suing Metromail and the Texas criminal justice system for "outrageous disregard of public safety ... and dangerous invasion of privacy," among other things. It's hard not to feel that she has a point.

In fact, the manipulation of personal data that have been fed into the maw of the information society is, to cop an oft-used metaphor, like making sausage. If we really knew what was involved, we probably would want to have as little to do with the process as possible. The trouble is, we don't have that option. The relentless and systematic collection, compilation, and selling of personal information are built into the texture of everyday life. You may imagine that you can keep your distance from the vacuum-like data intakes by making shrewd choices about when, where, and to whom you disclose. But unless you're prepared to adopt a lifestyle like Theodore Kaczynski's, you're wrong.

Beverly Dennis, we trust, will bounce back from the nasty experience caused by the misappropriation of her data. But there's evidence that other types of misuse could be even more harmful.

With rising public anxiety about the victimization of children, for example, parents and other concerned adults are noticing how easy it is to get data that could be put to sinister use. To dramatize the point, a Los Angeles television reporter recently purchased from Metromail a list of 5,500 children, with their family names and addresses. Not to make the exercise too subtle, the reporter placed the order in the name of Richard Allen Davis, the man convicted for abducting, sexually assaulting, and murdering 12-year-old Polly Klaas.

It's hard to say precisely where these particular data originated. We do know that lists like this are compiled from such sources as the "birthday clubs" that retailers encourage parents to enroll their kids in, subscription lists for children's magazines, and toy store discount cards. What is almost certain is that whoever provided the information did not realize he or she was helping to feed a commercial data bank.

The most alarming uses of personal data often involve the least obtrusive forms of collection. Take getting a prescription filled. Increasingly, this involves feeding the patients' and physicians' names, along with other identifying data on the people and drugs involved, into a computer. Sometimes the acknowledged purpose of the data entry is to determine whether the charges are covered by insurance. In some places, laws require prescription data to be fed into government sys-

JAMES RULE *is a professor of sociology at SUNY, Stony Brook, and is an editor of* Dissent. LAWRENCE HUNTER *is a computer scientist at the National Institutes of Health, and the Washington, D.C. chapter chair of Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility.*

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tems aimed at curbing prescription drug abuse. But whatever the ostensible purposes, people lose control over their information once it enters the data stream.

Often pharmacists sell information to "switchers"—operations that find buyers for such data. Some switchers, for example, collate information on users of specific drugs for sale to manufacturers of over-the-counter companion drugs. Then manufacturers direct advertising appeals to the targeted patients. Are these practices beneficial to patients? Conceivably, if the companion drug helps. Can they be dangerous? Quite possibly, for those who use the new medication without seeking medical advice from their own physicians.

But for most Americans, the issue here is probably not whether these practices are medically beneficial. It is that people whose data are appropriated in these ways have no say in what happens to their information. Indeed, it's not even legally theirs. Patients may have thought that their prescriptions were a matter between themselves and their pharmacists, but that idea is going the way of vinyl records. There is just too much demand for personal information, and there are too many sophisticated techniques for getting it.

Some may consider this the inevitable by-product of living in an information age. But these leaks can lead to authentic tragedies. John Doe, an AIDS sufferer, was a middle-level manager of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA). He had disclosed his condition only to his immediate superior at SEPTA, someone he trusted. But then other managers at the organization noted that Doe's charges on the employer-backed prescription plan were unusually high and had his account audited. The investigation showed that Doe had been getting prescriptions for Retrovir, an anti-AIDS drug.

The result for Doe was stigmatization at work over matters that he had every right to keep to himself. Doe had maybe a year left in his work life, his attorney Clifford Boardman told *Newsday*, and every day was important to him. This disclosure took away his peace of mind. A federal jury awarded Doe $125,000, but the verdict was overturned on appeal. "We hold that a self-insured employer's need for access to employee prescription records ... outweighs an employee's interest in keeping his prescription drug purchases confidential," the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals concluded.

Businesses are increasingly realizing there's a gold mine in personal data. Fortunes await those who can devise slick ways for distinguishing who should receive consumer credit, and on what terms; or for identifying profitable customers for insurance companies; or for specifying the best targets for marketing campaigns. These incentives have led to the growth of vast industries that depend on personal information as the essential raw material.

The sources for the data are all but endless, and often unobtrusive. Every call to an 800 number is apt to disclose the caller's phone number, giving resourceful data collectors access to the caller's name and address. One phone company recently created an electronic system that flashes information about the social characteristics of the caller's neighborhood. Internet transactions and website visits also may enable data collectors to infer the caller's identity. Every product coupon submitted for a rebate, every warranty slip filed with a manufacturer, every credit card sale—almost any identifiable fact about an American consumer—may provide grist for the commercial information mills.

Not all the sources are commercial enterprises. Charities, magazines, hospitals, and countless other not-for-profit organizations sell their data. Activist groups from right to left often sell lists of their supporters or trade them with other organizations. The U.S. Postal Service now routinely releases customers' change-of-address information—typically without their knowledge—to businesses who want it.

State motor vehicle registrars have long realized that records they compile—under legal compulsion—of accidents, driving infractions, and the like are valuable to insurance companies. Many states turn a pretty penny releasing driver data to insurance companies and the organizations that serve them. It makes financial sense; millions of requests per year at several dollars apiece help offset many a state budget deficit.

Record Sale

A typical mailing list company trumpets the availability of information on "83 million families, selectable by income, age, credit card use, mail-order buying, number (and age) of children, type of automobile, type of home. . . ." For an additional price, the same broker will provide "ethnic name selection," guessing the ethnicity of those in their databases by statistical analysis of names. Customers may wish to select, for example, names and phone numbers of all the black accountants in Washington, D.C., or contributors to gay charities, or purchasers of products for incontinence.

The ability to deal with vast numbers of individuals, while still attending to the fine detail of individual cases, yields stunning capabilities. And it's most alarming with medical data. The rise of third-party payment for medical needs and intense competition—among insurers, employers, and other businesses—to avoid people who might develop costly diseases have

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fueled ferocious appetites for personal data.

In a case reported recently in *Time*, for example, a banker serving on a state health commission pulled a list of cancer patients in his area, determined which ones had loans with his bank, then called in the loans. And as with the AIDS sufferer mentioned earlier, prescription and other medical records are increasingly accessible to companies carrying medical insurance for their staffs. This dual role—employer and provider of medical insurance—tends inexorably to bring data together from relationships most of us would like to see hermetically walled off from one another.

In April 1996, *Newsday* reporter John Riley told the story of Veronica, a patient whose psychotherapy for depression was covered by her employer. Like many in the same situation, Veronica was alarmed to learn that, to extend the treatment, her therapist had to provide details of her problems to the managed care company paying the bills. Routinely, Riley writes, "doctors, patients and pharmacists ... must feed patient information up the system's food chain to insurers who may, in turn, share it with each other, with employers and with information vendors in a virtually unregulated process."

One's choices of video rentals are better protected under current American law than one's medical records.

This is not to say the manipulation of personal data has no advantages. We can be offered useful products and services we would otherwise miss. But what is at stake are the legal and social arrangements that will shape technological changes now in course. The current framework simply doesn't reflect the realities of a world where personal information has become the essential raw material for several major industries.

Of course, there are some important protections for personal information. The Privacy Act of 1974, which gave individuals access to data held by government agencies and allowed them to challenge its accuracy, was a positive step. If this law has a salient flaw, it is its failure in practice to achieve what was a key element of its original intent—to prevent data collected for one purpose from being used for other purposes that may not suit the interests of the provider.

Nothing so comprehensive as the Privacy Act exists for private-sector data. Coverage is piecemeal and chaotic. The occasional checks on appropriation of personal data—such as the right to review your credit record to make sure it's accurate—found in one sector are lacking elsewhere. As medical privacy specialist Sheri Alpert has commented, one's choices of video rentals are better protected under current American law than one's medical records. Under the "Bork law," passed after that judge's video rental choices were revealed during his Supreme Court confirmation hearings, video customers have the right to "opt out" from disclosure. In most other commercial areas (most medical contexts included) personal data belong to whoever has possession of them. Thus many hospitals, like the pharmacies we mentioned earlier, sell personal data from their records.

Americans are certainly realizing their privacy is increasingly at risk. In September, the database firm Lexis-Nexis found itself in the midst of a firestorm of public complaint after people discovered the firm was selling access to individuals' data—Social Security numbers, maiden names, addresses, and the like. Librarian Robert Gitlin told the *Los Angeles Times*, "It's private information that I don't want released without any opportunity to consent."

Though worsening, this problem is not new. For years, many have sought omnibus legislation to establish a blanket right to privacy. They have failed, though, because privacy is a contested value; the interest in protecting personal data often collides with other legitimate interests. My desire to keep my medical history to myself, for example, will always be at odds with the interests of insurers in auditing the care I receive. Any reasonable policy would give both privacy and "right-to-know" interests their due.

Righting the Wrong

That's why we propose the creation of personal property rights that would supersede the commercial exploitation of personal information. Without express authorization from the subject, no personal data could be sold or traded from any file for any commercial purpose. Release of credit card data to credit reporting agencies, "switching" of prescription information for marketing purposes, or the resale of records from mail order firms to direct marketing firms would all

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be prohibited—unless the release of such data was explicitly authorized by the individual in question.

The immediate result of such a principle would be a new—and entirely healthy—set of choices and tensions. People would have to take careful stock of their interests in the use of their data, weighing privacy interests against other considerations. Imagine, for example, a consumer put off by a credit bureau's collection of information on her retail accounts, or unable to resolve a dispute with the credit bureau over her records. She could choose to prevent the release of further data to credit bureaus, or to prevent the current bureau from selling further reports. The bureau might then have the right to report that the record was sealed at the consumer's request, but no more.

Of course, consumers would have to weigh the consequences of their decisions—forgoing the benefits of having a credit record, or risking that creditors would choose not to do business with them or would charge them a higher rate of interest. Similarly, those denying their medical histories to insurance reporting firms might well find access to some forms of insurance blocked, or the costs of coverage raised. Because many consumers would probably choose to reap the benefits of releasing their information, commerce would not come grinding to a halt. But this system would place the onus of decision squarely where it belongs—on the individual who provides the data.

The information industry would then have incentives to make their activities acceptable to the people whose information they take, instead of just collecting it without their knowledge or permission. The credit reporting industry would have to sell its services to the public—presumably by promising more accurate, open reporting practices and by calling attention to the benefits of having an active and complete credit record. Direct marketers would have to convince the public that their attentions were, on balance, an advantage to the customer. Businesses would need to convince customers that the sale of their information really worked to their advantage—if not, customers would simply refuse their permission for release.

One end result of this new right would be a decrease in the quantity of privacy-invading experiences, from junk telephone calls to unwanted appropriations of medical information, and a rise in their quality—that is, the potential they will actually benefit the individual concerned.

Some legislative straws in the wind suggest that public opinion may now be open to a right like the one proposed here. GOP Congressman Bob Franks has proposed a bill to require parental consent before children's data can be commercialized. New Jersey state Sen. Richard Codey last February introduced a bill barring companies from renting or selling consumer names "without prior written or electronic consent" from the party concerned. About the same time, the Minnesota legislature was considering a similar bill applying to on-line service companies.

The courts are also starting to address the problem. In a case against Radio Shack, Robert Beken won $1,000 in damages for misuse of his personal data. Beken had written a contract on the back of his check to the electronics chain, committing them not to place him on the store's mailing list or send him any advertisements or mailings. The court rejected Radio Shack's defense that the clerk accepting the check had no authority to enter into such a contract with Beken.

But we believe that court decisions or piecemeal legislation will never provide the protection that would be afforded by a comprehensive right. The right we propose would not categorically block any of the useful forms of data exchange underlying today's information society. Nor would it prevent any organization from maintaining its own files on clients or customers—provided that the data involved were provided by, or with the consent of, those concerned. It would simply require their permission before their data could be released.

Who could take exception to the institution of personal data rights? Only the vast industries that now appropriate personal data for free. Information-collecting industries have often sought immunity from privacy-protecting legislation on freedom of expression grounds. But it hardly makes sense to identify the same value in "commercial speech" as in expression of opinion on public affairs, which would still be protected. Nothing proposed here, for example, should detract from the right of journalists or others to obtain personal data on public figures for news stories or other forms of public discussion.

This measure wouldn't solve all the sticky policy dilemmas associated with privacy protection. Some personal data no doubt should never be marketed for commercial use—those on children, for example, or individuals' DNA profiles. But establishing a general property right in personal data would create a potent new weapon for ordinary Americans to defend themselves against pressures on their privacy. With the information age hitting high gear in the 1990s, there's only so much time to get the genie back in the bottle. Otherwise, we will just have to adjust to living in see-through houses on the information highway. ●

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Memo *of the* Month

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June 28, 1996

New Bedford Standard-Times
555 Pleasant St.
New Bedford, MA 02742

Attention: Mr. Daniel L. O'Brien, Music Critic

Dear Mr. O'Brien:

We represent Iso Briselli. Mr. Briselli has brought to our attention false and defamatory statements concerning, among other inaccuracies, his inability to perform the third movement of Samuel Barber's "Violin Concerto, Op. 14." These defamatory statements have occasionally appeared in program notes and elsewhere as part of the history surrounding the commissioning of this work.

We are enclosing an article by George Diehl, Ph.D., which appeared in the November, 1995 issue of *Strad* magazine. This article presents an accurate version of the facts. If you are interested in Samuel Barber's Violin Concerto, we urge you to read the article before publicly commenting on the work's history. We must advise you, however, that your publication of the defamatory version of events may lead to the commencement of a defamation action against you on behalf of our client.

If you have any questions concerning this matter, please do not hesitate to contact us at your convenience.

Very truly yours,

Alan L. Spielman

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Under the Right's Wing

How the conservative press is recruiting and training its own

By Thomas Toch

THE *DARTMOUTH REVIEW*, THE RANCOROUS, ultra-conservative Ivy League student newspaper, has been grabbing headlines for a long time. Back in 1988, "60 Minutes" traveled to the Hanover, N.H., campus to report on the paper's racially tinged confrontation with an African American professor over the quality of his teaching methods—an incident that led to the university's suspension of three *Review* editors for invasion of privacy and disorderly conduct. What's received less public attention is that conservative organizations have spent millions of dollars in recent years cloning the Dartmouth paper at over 100 top-ranked colleges and universities. And the papers are not merely carrying the right's banner into campus debates. They are turning out a new generation of conservative thinkers and writers who are taking up high-profile posts in conservative public policy circles.

Past editors of the papers include many of the rising stars at the think tanks, journals, and other institutions that shape the right-of-center agenda inside the Beltway. Among them are the *Vassar Spectator*'s Marc Thiessen, now Jesse Helms's press spokesman at the Senate Foreign Relations Committee; the *Wesleyan Review*'s Matthew Rees, a staff writer at *The Weekly Standard*; the *Virginia Advocate*'s Rich Lowry, the national political writer at the *National Review*; the *Michigan Review*'s Jonathan J. Miller, vice president of the Center for Equal Opportunity; the *Northwestern Review*'s Lynne Munson, recently Lynne Cheney's top staffer at the American Enterprise Institute and now in the policy office of the Dole campaign; the *Princeton Sentinel*'s Ruth Shalit, an associate editor for *The New Republic*; and the University of Iowa's *Campus Review* columnist David Mastio, now an editorial writer and op-ed page editor at *USA Today*. At 29, Theissen is the oldest of the group.

THOMAS TOCH, *a senior editor at* U.S. News and World Report, *is writing a book about the privatization of schools.*

Driving the conservative student newspaper movement are some of the nation's biggest right-leaning foundations. The single largest funder is the New York-based John M. Olin Foundation. Endowed by a firearms fortune, Olin spends about $200,000 a year in support of conservative campus journalism as part of its extensive funding of conservative causes. The foundation also bankrolls the Hudson Institute, a conservative think tank, and the National Association of Scholars, an organization of conservative college professors. And right-wing commentators William Bennett (the John M. Olin fellow at the Heritage Foundation), Robert Bork, and David Brock have written books under Olin grants, as has Dinesh D'Souza, the best-selling culture critic who helped launch the *Dartmouth Review* a decade ago. Says James Piereson, Olin's executive director, of the foundation's campus newspaper crusade: "We're fighting a war of ideas. We want to reach the nation's future leaders." It's a war, conservatives contend, that pits the conservative David against the liberal Goliath.

But while mainstream student papers outnumber their conservative counterparts, the financial muscle behind the right's campus crusade belies the image of conservative student scribes as poor underdogs. Other notable backers include the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation, a funder of David Brock's attacks on Anita Hill ("a little bit nutty and little bit slutty"); the Sarah Scaife Foundation, a major benefactor of right-wing think tanks such as the Heritage Foundation and the Free Congress Foundation; and the Adolph Coors Foundation.

The bulk of foundation donations are funneled through conservative tax-exempt organizations like the Intercollegiate Studies Institute, Inc., a non-profit conservative advocacy group located outside Wilmington, Delaware. Headed by former Reagan White House policy guru T. Kenneth Cribb Jr., the ISI runs the Collegiate Network, an alliance of 56 conservative campus papers. With over $300,000 a year from Olin, Scaife, and other foundations, the Collegiate Network works to

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launch new publications and strengthen existing ones.

The Network's financial largesse is crucial. Member papers receive grants as large as $3,000 a year, and with the low cost of desktop publishing, the cash goes a long way. But the organization's contributions go beyond the purely financial. The Network publishes a 92-page guide, "Start the Presses!," offering publishing novices advice on topics ranging from news gathering to ad sales. It also sponsors two, expenses-paid editors' conferences a year; maintains e-mail and 800-number phone links to the Network's staff; and provides a steady flow of story ideas. Its latest offering: a site on the World Wide Web, where a number of its member papers are available electronically.

Most of the new conservative papers publish monthly, are free, and are distributed alongside "official" student publications in dorm lobbies, student unions, libraries, and other common areas. Their mainstream rivals frequently have larger press runs and publish more often, usually daily or weekly. But the conservative papers attract readers nonetheless—not because today's students are more conservative; surveys reveal that they aren't. Rather, the papers are a presence on their campuses because they challenge the prevailing Zeitgeist on a range of emotional issues. They are hard to ignore.

Conservative organizations have secured their voice on campus by offering students a moveable feast of money, contacts, and programs.

Like the *Dartmouth Review*, the new papers wage a relentless battle against speech codes, affirmative action, black studies, women's studies, gay rights, ethnic housing, and the "anti-conservative" bent of established campus papers. Predictably, their heroes are Newt Gingrich, Charles Murray, Ronald Reagan, Phyllis Schlafly, Pat Buchanan, and, of course, D'Souza.

The publications are at times thoughtful, at times witty. The *Duke Review* recently ran a funny dig at "MasterCard Marxists" on the university's faculty. In other instances the papers engage in unwitting self-parody. "The Doctor of Democracy has employed all of his considerable talent on loan from God to create his greatest work of insight yet," gushed the University of North Carolina's *Carolina Review* about Rush Limbaugh's latest right-wing screed, *See, I Told You So.*

But while the campus papers play a valuable role as a forum for conservative opinions, their methods are at times dubious. The inaugural issue of the four-year-old *Carolina Review* suggested that President Clinton's "frequent policy shifts [are] caused by variations in Hillary's menstrual cycle." Last year, *The Duke Review* ran a headline, "Being Queer for Credit." In another story, it disparaged a faculty member as a "penis-envying . . . ethnic pimp." Much like radio "shock jocks," the antagonistic tone of some of the papers seems aimed more at escalating the volume than the quality of the debate.

Indeed, the more confrontational articles provoke outrage. Last winter, the *Carolina Review*'s depiction of a Jewish candidate for student body president with horns and a trident (a common characterization of Jews by anti-Semites) led to an outcry from Jewish faculty members and a public rebuke by the university's chancellor. Often, backlash against the papers takes the form of guerrilla warfare. After *Right Reason*, a new conservative publication at Notre Dame, ran editorials last spring backing the university's refusal to recognize a student gay and lesbian group, the group's members swiped 2,000 copies of the paper, then went on local television news to defend the heist.

Contrary to conventional wisdom, the papers' editors aren't all WASPy guys in wingtips. Women edit about a dozen of the publications, and there are a smattering of African American editors, including the recent opinion editor of the three-year-old *Williams Free Press*. Many of the minority editors pay a price for their conservative allegiances. Jenny Choo, a past editor of the *Redwood Review* at the University of California-Santa Cruz, was branded a "banana"—yellow on the outside, white in the middle—by fellow Asian American students after she wrote an editorial urging the university to cut back its attempts to promote multiculturalism in the face of a budget crunch.

In addition to helping conservative journalists establish a presence on campus, the Collegiate Network plugs them into the conservative advocacy industry. It runs a summer lecture program in Washington where several dozen editors receive the conservative gospel from—and rub shoulders with—the likes of Bennett, Bork, Cheney, William Kristol, and other big names on the Right. The Network also brokers valuable stepping-stone jobs for its editors. It has funded year-long internships at *The New Republic* and currently pays for a staffer at *The Weekly*

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Standard. Shalit, author of a widely debated piece on racial hiring at *The Washington Post*, landed at *The New Republic* on a Network internship after her stint as editor of the *Princeton Sentinel.* So did Rees, who worked with *TNR*'s conservative pundit Fred Barnes after editing the *Review* at Wesleyan University in Connecticut. Theissen got his first break, an internship in the Reagan White House, through the Network as a junior at Vassar.

Many staffers at conservative campus publications also participate in expenses-paid internships sponsored by the National Journalism Center, an affiliate of the Education and Research Institute, a right-wing organization headed by M. Stanton Evans. NJC interns spend six weeks working with the center's staff and another six working with writers and editors at conservative media like *Human Events* and *National Empowerment Television.* Bernadette Malone, the 1993-1994 editor of the *Binghamton Review* at the State University of New York at Binghamton, interned through the Center last year with conservative columnist and talk-show host Robert Novak. Malone is now a full-time Novak staffer. John Fund of *The Wall Street Journal*'s editorial page is another notable NJC alumnus.

No less important to the movement is the Leadership Institute, a tax-exempt conservative group headed by Morton Blackwell, a former Reagan aide and

Who's Who

BY SUSAN THREADGILL

- *Jil Sander Meets Armani*
- *More Monkey Business*
- *Threadgill Blamed for Hill Defeat*

We always like to think that the Democrats are the party of the people. But a friend overheard this conversation at the convention in Chicago. Man to woman who had just gotten on the elevator: "Don't I know you? Weren't you wearing a **Jil Sander** suit at __'s lunch?" Woman: "Yes! You were wearing an **Armani** with the same fabric." They must have been lobbyists. . . .

Speaking of flush lobbyists, another convention source tells us about a casino lobbyist who presented **Richard Gephardt** with a $20,000 contribution to the party—twice the amount Gephardt was expecting. He was so touched that he invited the lobbyist to share his convention skybox. . . .

We promise to lay off **Dick Morris** items for at least a month—okay, our fingers are crossed—but we can't resist giving you these two comments about the solicitous calls **Bill Clinton** and **Al Gore** made to the consultant. "They acted," observed **Richard Cohen**, "as if Morris had been hit by a car on the way to do volunteer work at a homeless shelter."

"When **Lani Guinier** . . . was forced to withdraw because of her beliefs—not her misconduct—she didn't get a call, so why does Dick Morris?"asked **Susan Estrich.** We also like **Lance Morrow**'s explanation of the motive behind the calls: "[F]or God's sake, keep Dick on the reservation." . . .

Had you lost track of **Billy Broadhurst**? Aficionados of political scandal will recall that Broadhurst was **Gary Hart**'s companion in fun and games. It was Broadhurst who chartered the Monkey Business, the boat that took Hart and **Donna Rice** to the Bahamas. Last month, he was indicted for fraud by a federal grand jury in Louisiana, accused of skimming money from construction contracts for two floating casinos in New Orleans. . .

How would **Bob Dole** perform the executive part of being chief executive? Not very well, implies a long article in *The New York Times* by **Elizabeth Kolbert** and **Adam Nagourney**. If you didn't get past the first page, you may have missed such quotes as "more adept at dealing with his peers than his subordinates" (**Barbara Sinclair**, a UCLA scholar), "didn't have a regular and easy relationship with people who were subordinates" (**Norman Ornstein** of the American Enterprise Institute), and "Dole has trouble leading large organizations. Being his White House Chief of Staff could be sheer hell" (**William B. Lacy**, a former top Dole aide).

The quotes we like best were, as they often are, from anonymous aides. One said: "The way decisions are communicated by him is through reverse Socratic method. You find out what the decision is by the questions you ask him—not because he's come over to tell you what he's decided."

Another observed that Dole rarely explains his decisions. "He

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leader of the College Republicans during the 1960s. Largely with funds garnered from direct mail efforts (Blackwell worked for conservative direct-mail guru Richard Viguerie in the 1970s), the Institute provides grants to start conservative student papers and trains the papers' staffs through the "student publications schools" it runs in Washington and around the nation. Participants in the two-day sessions get nuts-and-bolts advice on starting conservative student publications, including lectures on "fighting the campus left." Recent presenters include Major Garrett, the *Washington Times* political correspondent, and Kevin Pritchett, the former *Dartmouth Review* editor and *Wall Street Journal* editorial page staffer who is now an aide to Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott.

Conservatives may grouse about the hurdles they face in getting their perspectives heard in the media. But if the swelling ranks of influential alumni of the student newspaper network are a measure, conservatives don't need to be pitied so much as emulated. Conservative organizations have secured their voice on campus by offering students a moveable feast of money, contacts, and programs. Whatever the excesses of the conservatives' campus crusade, no one can argue that the right isn't getting a substantial return on its investment. ●

gives you a conclusion but no insight. You can't guess from a prior decision how he might make a future decision." . . .

In his new book, *Bare Knuckles and Back Rooms*, **Ed Rollins** says that **Ross Perot** accused him of being part of a CIA conspiracy to sabotage Perot. The Texas eccentric was convinced, according to Rollins, that **George Bush** had put Rollins on the CIA payroll to wreck the Perot campaign. . . .

Willie Brown, the mayor of San Francisco and the former speaker of the California Assembly, has been chosen one of its "humanitarians of the year" by a California chapter of the American Cancer Society. Hmmm. You may recall from a Who's Who item just a couple of months ago that, before he was overtaken by **Bob Dole**, Brown, according to one study, was the leading recipient of campaign contributions from the tobacco industry. "Willie Brown is probably responsible for more lung cancer and more kids smoking in the state of California than any other politician except maybe Pete Wilson," **Stanton Glantz**, the author of the study and a professor at the University of California at San Francisco, told *The San Francisco Examiner*. . . .

An informed source says **Scott Reed** is running the Dole campaign as a manager, not a strategist. It appears the campaign's only strategist is **Bob Dole** himself. In light of the Times' story above, that may explain why the campaign has been troubled. . . .

Last month, a reader from Bozeman, Montana, wrote complaining that a Who's Who item in our July/August issue had been unfair to Democratic Congressional candidate **Bill Yellowtail**. Haunted by images of headlines like "Threadgill Blamed for Yellowtail Defeat," we hasten to balance our reporting with this recent news about Yellowtail's opponent, **Rick Hill**, who has boasted that, in contrast to Yellowtail's failure to pay child support, he was devoted to his own children and "had fought hard to have the right to be part of their lives." But the *Helena Independent Record News* notes that when Hill first filed for divorce, he sought to give his wife custody of their three sons. Maybe he had good reason for wanting her to have custody. Then again, maybe Yellowtail had a good reason for not paying child support. . . .

We all know there has been a decline in civility in Congress, and many of us, including this magazine, pin most of the blame on Gingrichites. But it should be noted that when things have actually gotten physical, it's been Democrats who were to blame. Democrat **Sam Gibbons** yanked the tie of Republican **Bill Thomas**, and Democrat **Jim Moran** administered what *The Washington Post* describes as a "stiff shove" to Republican **Duke Cunningham**. . . .

Jay Lincoln

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GIs: Not Your Average Joes

What the military can teach us about race, class, and citizenship

BY AMY WALDMAN

Like much of southeast Washington, D.C., 8th Street has seen better days. But at the corner of I Street sits one local landmark unscarred by age, crime, poverty, or neglect—a symbol, you might say, of tradition untouched by progress: the U.S. Marine Corps barracks.

Amid urban chaos, it is an oasis of order. A guard mans the gate; inside, crisply uniformed men and women move with purpose. The lush, manicured parade, maintained by a horticulturist and a staff of 20, spreads to the foot of the commandant's residence. From the band room drift sounds of the United States Marine Band—"The President's Own"—rehearsing a haunting classical refrain.

But not only the physical contrast to the surrounding streets is stark: Those who live within this haven's walls are a breed apart as well. The young enlisted Marines I meet, none older than 24, have poise and self-possession well beyond their years. They carry themselves with pride and speak in modulated tones, their words laced heavily with "ma'ams." Their answers are thoughtful. They have come, by and large, from the South, and from the working class, the children of seamstresses and social workers, farmers and factory workers. But from the first day of boot camp they abandon their inherited identities to be reborn into the military class.

They signed up for many reasons—patriotism, opportunity, challenge, to find their mettle. Corporal Gabriel Ford, 21, enlisted three years ago after growing up on a West Virginia farm and deciding college wasn't for him. His parents divorced early, and he wanted to make something of himself before making a commitment like marriage. The Marines promised to make the most of him. "They break you down to ground zero," he says, "and then build you up. You realize you can be a leader, that you have all these qualities that you never knew you had."

For others, the lure is practical. Corporal Adrian Santiago, 21, was born in Mexico and raised in Chicago, where a persuasive Marine recruiter snagged him on the cusp of high school and adulthood. The recruiter convinced him that the Corps offered what he wanted from life: the chance to travel; to grow up; to afford more education. Such blandishments may seem to have cultish echoes, but they all happen to be true. Indeed, they are time-honored reasons for military service. Chief Warrant Officer Joe Boyer says he signed up 20 years ago because everyone from his Illinois small town high school was "going to the farm or going to work at Caterpillar to make bulldozers." Neither option appealed to him; slaying dragons and seeing the world did.

Yet Boyer says civilians have told him he must have gone into the military because he was too stupid to do anything else. This white male Midwesterner looks at me and says, "I am a stereotyped minority." He's right. Among the well-educated and well-off, the perception persists that the military is the blue-collar option of last resort.

Twenty-five years ago, that notion had some merit. Once the educated began to evade the draft, and then were let off the hook entirely by the draft's end, the military became a place for people with few options. Drunkenness, drug use, desertion, illiteracy, and racial tension were rife. Forty percent of Army recruits were high school dropouts.

But beginning in the early 1980s, the armed forces began raising standards and requiring, if not a high school diploma, at least a GED (and only a tiny per-

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centage of recruits have a GED instead of a diploma). Today, the caliber of recruits is the highest in history—more than 90 percent of enlisted men are high school graduates—and the services regularly turn away those who don't meet their standards. And because they have volunteered, recruits are truly committed.

If the raw material is impressive, so is the finished product. The military remains one of the few institutions in American life concerned with turning out good citizens who seek leadership, practice discipline, and believe in public service; and it has successfully tackled problems—most notably race and affirmative action—that continue to bedevil society at large. The military certainly isn't flawless, but it does have a lot to teach us. It's hard to learn at a distance, though, and the distance between the military and civilian populations has arguably never been greater.

All They Can Be

In 1989, Tenn Chowfren immigrated here from Jamaica. He had 19 years of life experience, a high school degree, and "no skills." So his parents did what desperate parents have done for generations: They encouraged him to enlist. In no time, he found himself in Army basic training. Soon, he not only had plenty of skills, but also what he calls "mental toughness," girded by a five-month deployment in Persian Gulf heat. He quickly ascended the ranks, then decided to go to college and become an officer. Today, he is an electrical engineering student at Howard University, as well as its Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) battalion commander. If he stays in the military, he will rise far. If he does not, he now has the skills and leadership experience "corporate America is looking for."

The military has always been an important force in assimilating and equipping immigrants like Chowfren for success. More remarkable, perhaps, is what it has done for a group of native-born citizens: African Americans. No group has benefited more from the upward mobility the military offers, because no institution in America has offered blacks more opportunity.

That's the thesis of *All That We Can Be: Black Leadership and Racial Integration the Army Way*, a new book by sociologists Charles Moskos and John Sibley Butler. Moskos and Butler trace the military's, and in particular the Army's, success not just in recruiting blacks, but in promoting them to positions of authority. Colin Powell is the most notable, but far from the only, symbol of that success. Seven percent of army generals are black; 11 percent of all officers; and 30 percent of enlisted men. The Army has made affirmative action work without quotas, without lowering standards, and without a white backlash.

Moskos and Butler identify several principles the army has relied on and civilian society could learn from. The first is to promote on merit—but only after enlarging the pool of qualified blacks from which to select. The army takes proactive steps to ensure that pool is big enough: recruiting heavily on historically black campuses, for example, and establishing education programs to bring the skills of potential recruits and officers up to par. Standards stay inflexibly high, which means everyone promoted has earned it—and everyone working under them knows it.

Moskos and Butler also stress that the army worries more about creating black opportunity than eliminating white racism. In truth, though, the nature of the military means that anything that gets in the way of mission accomplishment is unacceptable. Racism gets in the way. "From day one of boot camp," Marine Corporal Ford, who is white, tells me, "everyone is green." The military forces integration; in doing so, it illuminates why that ideal is still worth fighting for. Lance Corporal Tashawna Craig, a 19-year-old African American from Houston who followed her five uncles into the Marines, says growing up in the south made her wary when she saw the races freely mixing at boot camp. "I never thought I could work with [whites]," she says. She learned she could. "When I go home to the South I can feel the tension," she says. "I've never felt racial tension here."

Military race relations aren't perfect, of course. And if the peacetime benefits are high for blacks, so are the wartime costs: Blacks will be deployed in disproportionate numbers to their presence in the population (although a disproportionate number of blacks deployed are not sent into combat). That's why some black civil rights leaders look askance at military service: Upward mobility shouldn't require the willingness to strap on a uniform. That it too often does, however, tells us more about society than it does about the military.

The armed services also happen to be the only place, Moskos loves to point out, where blacks routinely boss around whites, who quickly learn that it's just like being bossed around by ... whites. The military isn't just providing lessons for civilian society, in other words: It is also shaping its charges.

In many ways. The military builds character—in the sense of resilience, courage, and leadership—by giving young people responsibility unimaginable to most civilians. At age 23, John Brown, a Marine second lieutenant now training at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, will have under his command a group of enlisted men ranging from privates fresh out of recruit training to a staff

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sergeant with 10 years of service under his belt. "Some of the junior enlisted men will have personal problems," Brown says, "their wives still in high school, pregnant, with bills to pay. I will have to think things out to such a greater degree than I ever have before. I have to look out for them, help them take care of problems so the unit can function effectively." And military service will inspire an empathy—are his men cold? homesick? scared?—that he will carry into civilian life.

Brown will also acquire a deeply bred sense of ethics. The military operates under a code of honor most of us would find unsustainable. Write a bad check in the civilian world, and your bank subtracts $25 from your account. Do the same in the military, and your career may be over. The West Point creed reads, "A cadet will not lie, cheat, or steal, nor tolerate those who do," but even shading the truth or resorting to technicalities is frowned upon. This isn't always lived up to in dealings with civilians—think of military spokespeople misleading the press in Saigon or Riyadh, or Col. Oliver North's star turn before Congress—but in intramilitary interactions, it is an everpresent ideal.

The Army has made affirmative action work without relying on quotas or lowering standards, and without generating a white backlash.

More profoundly, those in the military grapple with moral dilemmas most of us skirt: When should you put your life on the line for your fellow man? Is it ethical to put completing a mission before saving a life? Is it honorable to put saving your own life before completing your mission? "If you go to war," one former Army artillery officer says, "you are morally compromised. Your hands have stains you'll never wash off if you've killed someone or ordered someone killed." Anyone who might go to war must contemplate what justifies crossing a line civilian society considers unbreachable.

Then there's the discipline, which to most civilians seems both archaic (who cares if your pants are creased properly?) and arbitrary (why should you do what someone tells you just because of his or her rank?). In fact, the discipline is anything but arbitrary: In combat, you must react instantly, as a unit, and you must react correctly; discipline hones those reflexes. As Brig. Gen. Richard Stillwell lectures a class of cadets in Rick Atkinson's *The Long Gray Line*, "West Point is tough! It is tough in the same way war is tough."

The discipline is bearable because those giving the orders have survived the same trials, and thrived; and—the occasional sadistic sergeant aside—they generally have their underlings' best interests at heart. The trust is earned. And while complete deference to authority isn't something we want to replicate in civilian life, there is a virtue in learning to do things you might not want to, and learning that you can survive that, too. Those with military experience say it endowed them with unshakable confidence in their ability to overcome any stress that civilian life has to offer.

Perhaps the greatest gap between the military and the civilian world is the relative weight each gives to rights and to responsibilities. American society is centered increasingly on individual rights, which in the American military are always subservient to individual obligations. People in the military learn self-discipline, but they also learn selflessness. That's what drew Major Ralph Peters into the Army 20 years ago. After growing up in a military family, he rebelled and became a musician. Then, in 1975, he was volunteer teaching at a refugee camp housed on a military base. He saw soldiers staying up until 2 a.m. to prepare for classes they were teaching the refugees; it was a sharp contrast to the "lazy, loudmouthed" civilians he knew. At age 23, he joined the Army.

Beyond the many things the military does daily in the service of society is the fact that its members have literally signed their lives over to protect that society. As our tolerance for military casualties diminishes, in the foreseeable future it is unlikely that thousands of men and women will have to give up their lives for us. But they are prepared to. As a result, they have thought deeply about what it is they are protecting: They are patriots, who will tell you emotionally that of the 20 countries they have visited, America, flaws and all, is the best; or about how they have seen people dying abroad for rights we take for granted. "People don't see the direct connection between their ability to walk around, have protests, vote how they want—and the military," says George Flowers, a Marine second lieutenant based at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. People don't, in

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fact, see the connection between the presence of a strong military and their right to disparage it.

A Corps Apart

Given that people in the military seem to have both bigger muscles and stronger moral fiber than many of us, it's no wonder that increasingly they exude disdain for nonservers and the mores they live by. Thomas Ricks of *The Wall Street Journal* provided a classic case study when he followed a group of Marines home from boot camp in 1995: They described their old friends as "losers." The Marines I met concur. When she first came back from boot camp, Tashawna Craig says, civilians suddenly seemed "so stupid, so silly," and most of all, "so undisciplined."

The Marines may be hard-core, but they are not unique. At Howard University, Army ROTC cadets with prior service as enlisted men express distaste and sometimes dismay at the behavior of their college peers, who talk in class, goof off, and party too much. Todd Mielke, a 23-year-old freshman who enlisted at 17, wants his degree so that he can become an officer, but he is palpably uncomfortable with civilian life. Among his pet peeves: the litter. In the army, you damn well pick up after yourself. "We've got really high personal standards," Mielke explains. But on campus, he says, people just throw their trash down.

The truth is that spending time around a group of Marines makes you very aware of your imperfections—from messy hair and tardiness to flabby thighs and white lies—which I suspect is one reason a lot of civilians keep a distance. (One Army officer I interviewed launched into a tirade on the terrible eating habits of civilians: They can't handle a knife and fork, they chew with their mouth open, and so on. I was thankful we were on the phone, and not at lunch.) Such standards of behavior are simply foreign to most civilians.

Which is why, more and more, those drawn to the military lifestyle are themselves the products of military families. Consider Lance Corporal Christina L. Wright, one of the young Marines at the Washington, D.C. barracks. Her stepfather was in the Marines; from the time she was five, he conducted room inspections while she stood at attention. From then on, she says, she knew that she too would be a Marine—as is her older brother; as, she expects, her two younger brothers will be. She doesn't like the city, doesn't trust most of the civilians around her, and will always be far more comfortable with the Corps. The 18-year-old's goal is to become the Marine Corps' first female sergeant major (the highest ranking noncommissioned officer).

Indeed, more of those joining the armed forces are also making a career of it, and the combination of these trends is troubling. We have inadvertently developed a professional military caste. "I'm concerned we're losing touch with the society we're supposed to serve," Joe Boyer says. Thomas Ricks wrote earlier this year that "It now appears not only possible but likely that the U.S. military over the next 20 years will revert to a kind of garrison status, largely self-contained and increasingly distinct as a separate society and subculture."

Reversing this trend requires understanding how the last 30 years brought us to this point: As society was shifting radically away from military values such as patriotism, and towards individualism and anti-authoritarianism, the proportion of that society serving in the military dwindled to a tiny minority. And most conspicuous in the nonserving majority, of course, were society's decision makers and opinion shapers.

High Class Dodgers

In his autobiography *A Good Life*, Ben Bradlee recalls chomping at the bit to escape Harvard to go fight in World War II. Three decades later, another Harvard student and future journalist, James Fallows, was starving himself to avoid the draft, an experience he recounted in a 1975 *Monthly* story. Bradlee's enthusiasm was widespread among his classmates; so was Fallows's recalcitrance.

What happened? Well, Vietnam, most cataclysmically. Until approximately 1963, military service was a rite of passage for many young men, including those either born to the upper classes (Kennedys) or destined for the upper ranks of the meritocracy (Elvis Presley). It was fairly rare to find a government leader—or sports star, or movie star, or journalist, or businessman—who had not experienced military service. It was the moral thing to do, and a generational bond. Two-thirds of Charles Moskos's Princeton class of 1956 went into the military after graduation. Among the Princeton graduates drafted or enlisting around then: Neil Rudenstine, now Harvard's president; *The New York Times*'s R.W. Apple; sociologist William Julius Wilson.

But as the Vietnam war machine geared up, leaders began opening loopholes, notably educational deferments, that told the rich and educated they were exempt from the obligation to serve. As the war's ignoble character became apparent, the well-educated and well-off rationalized evasion as moral, and service as stupid or wrong. Meanwhile, those without the education or know-how for escape, or those who believed it was their duty, went to Vietnam. The result was the politicization of military service, and indeed of patriotism: You were "with" America, or against it, in the military or opposed

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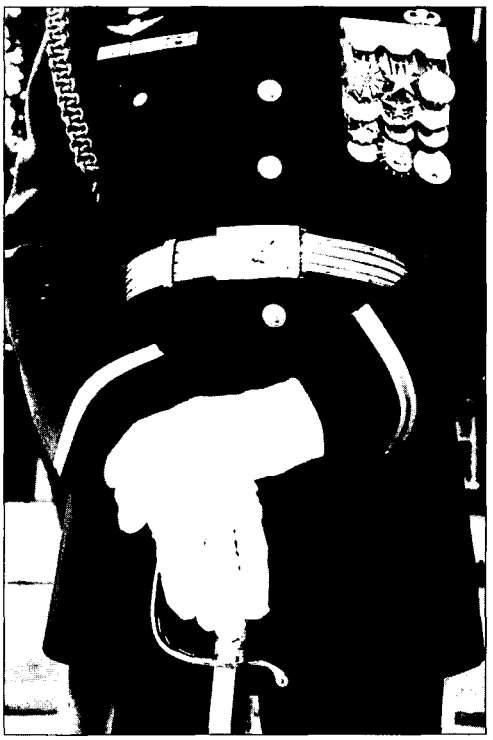
to it—and most young elites were opposed.

By 1973, when we officially instituted an all-volunteer force, the notion that not serving was the moral thing to do had been cemented. The system now reflected that: Instead of selecting soldiers from the population as a whole, we would purchase a proportion of our youth on the labor market. That, naturally, changed even more who served—and who didn't. No longer would the children—or youthful versions of—Fortune 500 executives, Ivy League professors, senators and congressmen, and journalists have to evade service; they could simply ignore it, and they did. The military became middle- or working-class, or just plain poor. And so only a minority of the generation now assuming power in government, media, academia, and business has served—a circumstance that will become more dramatic as World War II and Korean War veterans retire or expire.



James Watts

One sign that the privileged feel no obligation to serve is in the numbers signing up from Ivy League schools and similar institutions. In the Princeton class of 1995, for example, 13 graduates went into the military. It's not entirely surprising: The military doesn't bother recruiting at many elite universities, and campus culture militates toward Wall Street, law school and consulting, where the milieu is familiar and the pay bountiful. The few who are interested in public service opt for programs like Teach for America or the Peace Corps. Nor do campuses offer many role models of military service, because few professors are veterans. Moskos, for example, is the only one in his department.

Indeed, it is professors who have often led the charge against one of the few conduits for elites into the military: ROTC programs, which once drew significant numbers into the armed services. During and after Vietnam, many prestigious private colleges phased ROTC out in the face of student opposition. In the 1970s and 1980s, ROTC made something of a comeback. But then came the fight over gays in the military, and once again, ROTC programs became political sacrificial lambs. (Some campuses also barred military recruiters.) In 1991, 62 ROTC programs were closed. That certainly wasn't all due to the controversy over gays in the military (as tuition has risen, the number of scholarships the military can pay for has fallen) but some of it was. And this time, the opposition was led by professors—the same generation who had been students voicing similar opposition during Vietnam. Where ROTC survived, as at Princeton and Dartmouth, it was largely because students resisted professors' opposition to the program.

Expelling ROTC programs from elite campuses may send a message, but it also has costs. For many students, the loss of ROTC is a lost opportunity—an ROTC scholarship at a "Tier-1 Alpha" (i.e., expensive) school like Princeton can pay up to $20,000 annually. Ivy League campuses also have been a wellspring for more liberal-minded officers over the past few decades. The military is an inherently conservative institution, made more so by the end of conscription, which essentially meant the end of white liberals in the army. By bringing in students from diverse campuses, ROTC helped mitigate that homogeneity. "A lot of people in the military don't want Harvard grads," says Air Force Colonel Charles J. Dunlap. "They want people from conservative schools in the Bible belt. They don't want an insider with a different outlook—and that's very bad for a military in a democracy."

If elite service benefits the military, military service also benefits the elite, or at least broadens their horizons, by doing what public schools once did: integrate people of different socioeconomic backgrounds. "You learn arrogance in the Ivy League," says a former Army lieutenant who graduated from Princeton and is now a Harvard graduate student. "You learn humility in the army, because some guy from a college you've never heard of knows a lot more than you do." He describes working with young enlisted men from backwater high schools in Louisiana and being profoundly impressed by their motivation and intelligence. When he told them so, many said he was the first person who had ever told them they were smart.

That few similarly privileged youth share that expe-

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rience is troubling, because they often grow up to be powerful adult leaders. Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service trains the elite of the foreign policy establishment, and it would seem logical that students have some interest in the military as a key foreign policy tool. Not so, as Richard G. Miles, a U.S. Army Reserve captain, found when he enrolled at the school. "The sum total of [my classmates'] knowledge about military matters—ranging from tactics to tanks—came from movies and magazine articles," he wrote in *Newsweek*. The Princeton-educated former Army lieutenant says he joined the military partly because he was interested in a career in politics or diplomacy. "I thought it would be inappropriate to strive for a position where I would be directing the military without having been directed myself." That is an uncommon perspective among aspiring political leaders these days.

Close to 60 percent of men in the Senate are veterans, but only 36 percent of the House (and a fifth of the freshman class). Only 20 percent of Senate-confirmed Clinton appointees are veterans, and only 4 percent of the White House staff (a fact that understandably has aroused the ire of vets who wonder why the administration looks like America in every category except military service). And consider the roster of possible presidential candidates who avoided active military service: Clinton, Gramm, Quayle, Cheney, Forbes, Kemp, Gingrich. Says one Army officer: "If Clinton tells an 18-year-old to go fight, he expects him to go whether or not he thinks it's a good idea. Yet he didn't think Vietnam was a good idea, he didn't want to serve, and he didn't. I'm not saying he didn't make a morally responsible choice. But given what he does [command the armed forces] ... it's a problematic choice." The same applies to all those with similar pasts who want his job. And it explains why Dole keeps running on his war record: He knows it resonates with the generation for whom service was a moral obligation.

Civilian leaders not serving isn't just morally, but also pragmatically, problematic. For a civilian to command the military, he must have the military's respect. To earn the military's respect, he must understand military culture. Fewer and fewer civilian leaders do. Thus, the Clinton administration has been marked by a litany of real and perceived slights and faux pas. Officers mutter about how Clinton salutes sloppily, with a shamefaced demeanor. They have not forgotten the White House staffer who allegedly told Gen. Barry McCaffrey, "I don't talk to people in the military." They have not forgiven the administration for making gays in the military its number-one priority. They ridicule Clinton's attempt (under the Soldiers and Sailors Relief Act of 1940) to use the president's role as commander-in-chief to delay Paula Jones's suit. Clinton managed to reopen old wounds when he said he felt "vindicated" in his avoidance of military service by Robert McNamara's concession that Vietnam was a mistake. And the perception that Clinton is morally challenged doesn't help his credibility in the socially conservative armed forces.

It is obviously important to have some leaders in government who haven't served, who have a skeptical attitude toward, not a vested interest in, the military. But it is crucial as well to have people in the White House and Congress who understand the institution, who know what questions to ask, as Dwight Eisenhower did, and who have the credibility to get answers. That's all the more true because at least some of the leaders who avoided service sometimes seem less skeptical about the military than guilt-ridden about their own past. "Thirty years later, now elected to positions of prominence, those who evaded service now truckle and fawn to demonstrate the depth of their regard for men in uniform," writes Andrew J. Bacevich, a professor at Johns Hopkins's School of Advanced International Studies.

Thus we have Bill Clinton, who somehow manages simultaneously to piss off and kiss up to the military. Eager to curry the military's approval, or fearful of incurring its wrath, Clinton has shied away from responsibly downsizing the military-industrial complex. Instead, there's hairy-chest beating, as the administration boasts about the size of its defense budget (which, of course, has less to do with military readiness than making smart decisions about how to spend the money). And, as *The Wall Street Journal* recently noted, Clinton just can't say no to Veterans Affairs Secretary (and war hero) Jesse Brown, whose budget keeps increasing even as his department's hospital system is vastly underutilized.

What matters even more is whether leaders have children or relatives who are serving, or know people who do. There is no authoritative count of how many of the children of congressmen or administration officials have served, but by all accounts it's a tiny percentage. "Ask any group of male community leaders over age fifty how many served in the military," former Navy secretary John Lehman has written, "and eight of ten hands will rise; ask how many have children who have served and it will rarely be one or more."

Yet many of these leaders are deciding to send the military into risky situations, particularly in the post-Cold War era, when "military operations other than war" have become commonplace. Where our national interest is not at stake, but our "values"—a much broader rubric—are, will we sacrifice American lives? That's never easy, but it is slightly easier if you are

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sending abstract "brave men and women in uniform" rather than Bobby Jones from your hometown. Easier, too, when the bodies come back. Consider that of 220 Marines killed in the 1983 Beirut bombing, 78 were Catholic and 64 were Baptist, the denominations most common to the working class. There were two Episcopalians, two Presbyterians, and no Jews. Of the 19 Americans recently killed in the Saudi Arabian bombing, 10 were Roman Catholics, and five Baptists.

The same standard, of course, ought to apply to journalists who are exhorting the president to send troops for a peacekeeping or humanitarian operation. Yet many journalists expressing such opinions also have nothing—or no one—at stake. Many of those covering the operations also have no military experience. That doesn't make good coverage prohibitive, but it makes it harder. During the Gulf War, for example, reporters stuck to what they knew: They based themselves in five star hotels in Dhahran, and reported—literally—from poolside (although they didn't tell their viewers that). They allowed themselves to be herded around by a Pentagon whose assertions went unchallenged. It took a week, for example, for the press corps to wake up to the fact that the Pentagon's boast about an 80 percent success rate in air missions in the Gulf was based on "arriving at the target and delivering the ordnance," not whether the ordnance actually hit the target.

Believe it or not, "military intellectual" is not an oxymoron.

Off-base notions about the military don't just surface in nonfiction. The intellectuals who shape popular culture and public perceptions no longer do military service either. Herman Wouk, James Jones, Irwin Shaw, Norman Mailer wrote, and imagined, great novels about war and the army from experience. Most of today's novelists aren't serving—and neither are producers, screenwriters, or directors, which is why so many of today's miliary characters are caricatures. (Two recent movies, *The Rock* and *Broken Arrow*, both feature mad vets holding cities hostage.)

No wonder so many of us are so ignorant about today's military—and so many elites so dismissive of it. "Working-class folks respect the military because they constitute most of it," says Ralph Peters, who now works in the Office of Drug Policy. "But when I meet academics, or people in government or the private sector, they're absolutely astonished that I'm in the military and can also speak in complete sentences."

Peters not only can speak in complete sentences; he's actually quite brilliant. He is a Russia specialist—fluent in the language, conversant in the literature, authoritative on policy and culture. He has an M.A. and four years of education beyond that. He is writing his seventh novel. Believe it or not, "military intellectual" is not an oxymoron.

The irony is that even as we fail to recognize the brains in the military, we imbue it with all sorts of other superhuman qualities, romanticizing what we don't really understand. The national hysteria over Colin Powell was akin to the second coming of Christ; somehow, we projected his ability to lick Saddam Hussein onto bad schools, drugs, the economy. Clinton boasted during the first presidential debate that he had "appointed a four-star general as drug czar...the most heavily decorated soldier in uniform when he retired," as if the correlation between a successful military career and the ability to deter drug use is perfectly clear.

This rosy, hazy view of the competent modern military encourages civilians to expand the military's purview into peacekeeping, drug interdiction, humanitarian intervention, riot control, disaster relief, even chauffeuring Olympic athletes, an inclination compounded by the fact that we now have a 1.5 million person military with no Cold War and no clear mission. A belief in the omnipotent military sends more soldiers into harm's way; it also gives a potentially dangerous level of political power to the military.

The combination of a powerful and self-righteous military and a naive and guilt-ridden civilian leadership isn't a good one. A military is crucial to a democracy but is not itself democratic, and we don't want a society in its image. What we want are civilians who understand and respect what the military is and what it does, and who share the burden of public service it increasingly shoulders alone.

Universal Service

John Keegan's masterpiece of military history, *The Face of Battle*, contains a striking scene from the battle of Waterloo. The British are defending a chateau against a fierce French onslaught when a British officer, Captain Wyndham, spots a French Grenadier clambering over the gate. Wyndham has a weapon in his hand, but rather than shooting the interloper himself, according to an eyewitness report, he "instantly

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desired Sergeant Graham, whose musket he was holding while the latter was bringing forward another piece of timber, to drop the wood, take his firelock and shoot the intruder." The blood would be on the sergeant's hands, which was exactly Keegan's point: The officer class had begun to find killing in battle distasteful and therefore were delegating the dirty work.

Waterloo is now battlefield lore, but this story has its modern permutations. Who gives the order to kill, and who executes it, isn't just a wartime dilemma. Any democratic society that wants to ensure its preservation grapples with the same decision—or ought to—on a daily basis, especially when the military is under civilian command. I'm certainly not in a position to condemn those who haven't served in the military; I didn't rush off to a recruiting office after college. But I think if we are going to ask others to do what we ourselves are unwilling to, we should consider the implications of an all-volunteer military. It's harder to do that when the military is an isolated abstraction.

The obvious solution, one this magazine has long advocated, is to resurrect the draft. That remains a noble ideal, but an increasingly impractical one. The military today is much too small to sustain the numbers universal conscription would churn up. Much of its operation also requires a technological sophistication that draftees would have difficulty acquiring in a year or two; there is less of a place for conscripts in an increasingly professionalized military. A draft, remember, might not just draw in the elite; it could also pressure the military to accept those it now prides itself on weeding out.

So how do we stem the growing alienation between civilians, especially elite civilians, and soldiers, and recover the class mixing, character building, and community sustenance that democratically distributed military service once provided? Various educational measures could improve civil-military relations: Require military officers to go to civilian graduate schools and civilian decision makers to spend time at military academies; preserve or restore ROTC on campuses, both to provide access to the military and because its mere presence can educate students about military affairs; and have undergraduates study military history and culture.

But we need to take more dramatic steps, especially as military service becomes less a calling than a ticket. Recruiters now rely more on appeals to bread-and-butter needs and aspirations than to patriotism and public service. "Are you in the market for skill training, a guaranteed salary, and money for college?" the phone message at one Army recruiting office asks. These are certainly valid reasons for joining the military, and pay and benefits need to be generous enough to lure good people and recognize the service they perform. But the danger is that gradually the civilian ethos of serving yourself will overwhelm the military ethos of serving the country, that young people anxious to compete with their peers and surpass their parents will shun the less lucrative returns military service provides.

Reversing this trend ultimately may have nothing to do with getting more people to serve in the military—and everything to do with getting more people to serve, period. The fact is, a tiny proportion of college graduates go into the Peace Corps or Teach for America. Most go to work for themselves—a fact those in the military, or considering the military, can't help but notice. People are simply out of the habit of serving.

As a remedy, Moskos and Butler propose national community service for young people. But since we can't afford a national service program for all young Americans, the best compromise may be a national service lottery: If your number comes up, you can do military service (if you meet the military's standards); or, as in Germany, you can opt for civilian service. Those going into the military will, of course, be putting more on the line; their compensation should reflect that.

Such a program could draw a wider pool of people into the armed services, including at least a few more children of the powerful and privileged. A lottery would also provide the military with more short-termers and fewer lifers, which would mean a healthy injection of skepticism and self-criticism by those whose careers wouldn't be on the line. For those serving, it could renew a national sense of obligation, an understanding that rights require sacrifice. It would impose discipline on its participants and demand responsibility. And it would throw together young Americans of every stripe.

National service is, of course, popular among neoliberals, but what surprised me was how many military people I talked to proposed it—indeed were passionate about it. This is, in part, because it would make those who volunteer for military service feel less alone in shouldering the burdens of citizenship. But it is also because they believe in duty, honor, and country—and understand that paying tribute to those words has little to do with wearing a uniform. ●

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It's Not *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*

The Senate filibuster ain't what it used to be

BY BILL DAUSTER

THE LADY VANISHED. . . . "I OBJECT," was all she said before she turned and strode through the swinging doors. Senate Democratic Leader Tom Daschle called out to the lady, Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison: "Would the senator from Texas wish to state her reason for the objection? Mr. President, could we get the attention of the senator from Texas?" But she was gone.

Such is the fashion of the filibuster in the modern Senate. No longer does a senator hold the floor in long, impassioned debate, as in the film *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington.* Now legislators log their filibusters with the leadership, and the Senate pretends to hold them. A senator doesn't even need to attend her own filibuster. Her party handles it for her.

It used to be more like the movies. Senators delivered seemingly interminable speeches. They taxed their stamina to the limit. They employed clever means to sustain themselves for long periods during which they could neither eat nor withdraw to answer nature's call.

The indefatigable Senator Strom Thurmond holds the record. In August 1957, he addressed the Senate for 24 hours and 18 minutes in an effort to halt the advance of civil rights for African Americans. Running a close second, Senator Wayne Morse held the floor for over 22 hours fighting the Tidelands oil bill in 1953. Senator Robert La Follette Sr. spent almost 19 hours on his feet battling the Aldrich-Vreeland currency bill in 1908.

These somnolent soliloquies earned the Senate a reputation as a tiring place. Former Dean of the House of Representatives Jamie Whitten told how, in the wee hours of the morning, Senator Homer Ferguson once confessed, "Jamie, there are only two ways our Senate can act, either by unanimous consent or exhaustion."

The record for the longest speech of recent years belongs to Senator Alfonse D'Amato of New York, who held up a tax bill in October 1992 in a vain bid to save jobs at a Cortland, N. Y., typewriter factory. But Senator D'Amato's election-year filibuster had more to do with showmanship than legislation. His performance included singing selections from "Deep in the Heart of Texas" (for the benefit of Finance Committee Chairman Lloyd Bentsen, who just wanted to finish his tax bill) and "South of the Border" (where the typewriter jobs seemed headed). Alessandra Stanley of *The New York Times* placed it "somewhere between Jimmy Stewart taking on the capital and the final moments of the 'Jerry Lewis Telethon.'"

Senator D'Amato's musical revue was the exception to the modern rule. More and more frequently, senators are forgoing the traditional practice of personally holding the floor to delay a vote. Now, senators simply register with their party leader, usually by letter, their objections to the Senate's proceeding to a matter. This objection—called "a hold"—implies the threat of a filibuster should the Senate take up the disputed matter. With the leadership honoring her hold, a senator can be assured that action on the disputed matter will be slowed—even in the senator's absence. The majority leader reserves the right to force a senator to come down to the Senate floor and object in person, as Majority Leader Trent Lott obliged Senator Hutchison to do on the occasion just related. But once Senator Hutchison registered her objection, she

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felt entirely secure exiting the chamber, relying on her leader to protect her rights—in this instance, to block the confirmation of a district court judge in Minnesota.

Of course, by choosing not to hold the floor themselves, senators lose some of their influence over the process. In honoring a hold, the party leadership agrees to slow a disputed matter from coming to the floor, but its overriding concerns remain to advance the party's general interests and to prevent the legislative process from grinding to a halt. (In Hutchison's case, the Senate went on to confirm the nominee.) If the disputed matter affects only one region or interest group, the party may not do much to protect an individual senator. In such instances, the affected legislators may have to resort to a full-fledged filibuster, as Senators Harry Reid and Richard Bryan of Nevada did in opposing legislation to locate a nuclear waste dump in their state. Still, more and more frequently, senators seem content to sacrifice a little control for convenience.

No longer does a senator hold the floor in a long, impassioned debate. Now they log their filibusters with the leadership, and the Senate pretends to hold them.

Stand and Deliver

When senators felt compelled to stand and deliver their demurrals, they tended to reserve the filibuster for a deeply held belief. But the modern filibuster, what Senate Parliamentarian Bob Dove calls "the gentleman's filibuster," involves so little inconvenience to individual senators that they use it for everything. Now, minor policy disputes readily escalate into filibusters requiring a vote of cloture, creating what Dove calls the "60-vote Senate": Any matter about which senators hold any feelings winds up requiring a supermajority of votes. As then-Senator Dan Quayle complained to *Congressional Quarterly* in 1987, the Senate has "trivialized" the filibuster.

Ending debate by a vote of cloture has also become less cumbersome. To make the trains run on time, in 1975, then-Majority Whip Robert Byrd pushed through a change in the filibuster rule, reducing the two-thirds vote requirement to a vote of 60 senators. Not surprisingly, the leadership began invoking cloture more frequently. Whereas the Senate conducted 45 roll-call votes on cloture in the entire half-century from 1919 to 1969, it conducted 99 in the 1970s and 138 in the 1980s. Already, 168 have been conducted in the 1990s. This increase has not gone unnoticed by legislators. Back in 1984, a select committee on procedure chaired by then-Senator Quayle concluded: "Cloture is not only invoked too often, it is invoked too soon."

At this point, the Senate rarely even bothers with the formal cloture procedure, which allows debate on a disputed bill to continue for 30 hours after the cloture is invoked. Instead, the Senate usually agrees by unanimous consent to hold the final vote at the time convenient to the largest number of senators. Why debate all night when you can not debate and say you did?

This no-fuss objection process has become a favorite tool for partisan disruption. This summer, the minimum wage bill, a gas-tax repeal, the health insurance bill, and a small-business tax cut bill were all locked together for a time like so many scorpions in a death grip of objections. During the previous Congress, Republicans successfully employed filibusters to block several Clinton initiatives, notably campaign finance and health care reform. Democrats tried the same in the 1980s.

This being an election year, the threat of filibusters has been especially popular in putting the brakes on the confirmation of judges and other appointed officials. No majority leader wants to spend the several days that calling a senator's bluff—or enduring an actual filibuster—would take simply to confirm a judge, especially one nominated by the president of another party. In effect, the Senate has raised the bar for appointment to many high offices to near unanimous approval from a club that includes—truth to tell—at least a few eccentric members. To his credit, Majority Leader Lott tried to march the Senate through a number of nominations, but occasionally ran into resistance, as with Senator Hutchison.

The ever-present threat of a filibuster does have an upside. At times, the intimation of such a delay is enough to get people talking. This summer, Senator Ted Kennedy used the threat of a filibuster to alter the

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Kennedy-Kassebaum health insurance bill. Making only a few explanatory speeches of reasonable length, and with the cooperation of his party's leadership, Senator Kennedy held up the appointment of conferees in order to negotiate differences between the House and Senate bills. He thus extracted from the Republican leadership a commitment that the final bill would contain a much more modest experiment on tax-subsidized medical savings accounts than Republicans wanted.

Still, the filibuster madness often frustrates senators. In mid-July, Majority Leader Lott complained bitterly at his news briefings of "slow-rolling gridlock" and "absolute gridlock." This increased frustration further erodes the Senate's storied comity. Perceiving less comity, a senator is more likely to throw a filibuster into the works of another senator's legislative dream. And so the Senate descends into a spiral of bitterness.

Frequent filibustering also frustrates voters. The 60-vote Senate has sapped the effectiveness of even relatively strong majority leaders like Bob Dole, Robert Byrd, and George Mitchell. When the Senate cannot enact the majority party's legislative agenda, the public questions the majority's competence or—worse yet—its sincere desire to get anything done. Without the accompanying oratories of explanation, the delays caused by gentleman's filibusters can seem pointlessly disruptive to the general public, and the Senate's workings become even less understandable to observers (which, thanks to C-Span, constitute more and more Americans). The public's cynicism grows because of the incomprehensible nature of the legislative process.

Cloture Clots

Several legislators have proposed changing the system. Senator Ron Wyden has made the modest proposal that senators be required to publicly acknowledge the holds they place. Majority Leader Lott is considering the proposal, but don't hold your breath.

Senator Quayle's 1984 committee recommended making it possible to end a filibuster simply on the motion to proceed. The 1993 Joint Committee on the Organization of Congress endorsed the proposal, but it went nowhere.

Calling filibusters "a process that is out of control," Senator Tom Harkin of Iowa proposed a sliding-scale cloture rule not unlike the pricing practices at clothing stores. The longer the Senate stayed on a matter, the fewer votes cloture would require. The Senate rejected Senator Harkin's amendment by a 76-to-19 vote.

The change most likely to curb the filibuster is the expansion of the budget process. Early in the 1980s and again this year, the majority stretched the budget process—which has time limits and thus immunity from filibustering—to cover nonbudgetary matters. That's how Congress enacted a Republican-leaning welfare reform bill this year. And this year's budget blueprint contemplated using the fast-track budget process for tax cuts.

While aimed at curbing abuses, these incursions on the filibuster threaten an important tool. For all its inconveniences, the filibuster serves useful purposes. Most significantly, it empowers organized minority parties and coalitions. Senator Byrd, who has stood on both the giving and receiving end of many a filibuster, writes in his Senate history:

> The Senate is the only forum in the government where the perfection of laws may be unhurried and where controversial decisions may be hammered out on the anvil of lengthy debate. The liberties of a free people will always be safe where a forum exists in which open and unlimited debate is allowed.

Maybe what we need is more debate, not less. Bring the decision making out of the back rooms and onto the Senate floor. Let the public see what all the deliberations and delays are about. Senators should be compelled once more to stand up, literally, for their convictions. Organized minorities certainly deserve a forum for objections, but the process should not be so simple it invites abuse. As with any freedom, misuse will lead to frustration and anger, resulting in misguided "reforms" that endanger the freedom itself. And senators' freedom to filibuster may at times preserve freedoms for us all. ●

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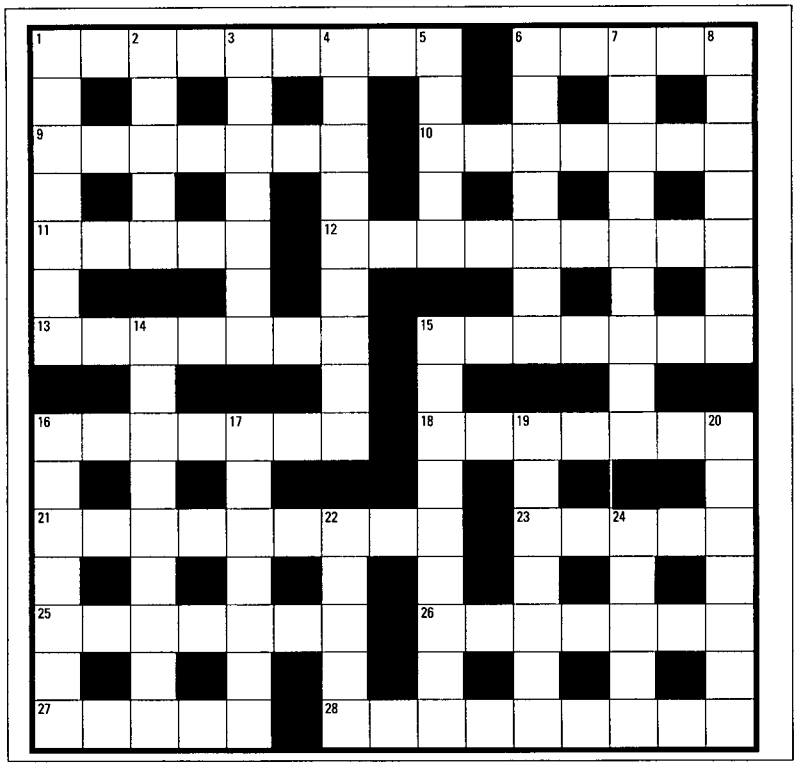
Political Puzzle

By John Barclay



The numbers indicate the number of letters and words—thus (2,3) means a two-letter word followed by a three-letter word. Groups of letters, such as USA, are treated as one word.

Across

1. Capitol shaken about Long Island kind of party (9)
6. Come out question (5)
9. Tchaikovsky, for example, composed sun airs (7)
10. Mealtime advice (7)
11. Reformed toper in the running in '96 (5)
12. Race feint upset contact (9)
13. New cab tire for New York City neighborhood (7)
15. Break up Princess's religious group (7)
16. Peer tax scheduled without hearing (2, 5)
18. Alarm made Laura so disturbed (7)
21. Strike virtuous proposal (4, 5)
23. After last party chat about luxury item (5)
25. Talk about and nix plea arrangement (7)
26. Calm oaf eating vegetable offering (7)
27. Contraband toupees after end of childhood (5)
28. Runs around magic span (9)

Down

1. Defensive measure at paper revolution (7)
2. Also-ran changed roles (5)
3. Sorted list inside the plant (7)
4. Nominee Frank consumed (9)
5. Long Island school quota (5)
6. Writes policy for breaking sunrise (7)
7. Cruise passengers set fortunetellers around at a distance (9)
8. Send half of telegram back around team habitat (7)
14. Unrehearsed child play before Tuesday sometimes (9)
15. Servant comes up carrying new graph banner (9)
16. AG edged around professorial type (7)
17. Suffering relapse, cancels (7)
19. City of Washington foiled MIA ploy (7)
20. Credentials for landlords? (7)
22. Stimulant working in muscular contraction (5)
24. Tennis star appearing in Dutch-Anglican church (5)

Answers to last month's puzzle

S	C	A	N	D	A	L		W	H	I	S	T	L	E
T		M		I		I		I		N		O		X
O	V	E	R	D	R	A	F	T		D	O	R	I	C
P		R		E		I		H		I		C		O
S	K	I	E	R		S	T	O	M	A	C	H	E	R
		C		O		O		U		N				I
H	E	A	R	T	E	N		T	S	A	R	I	N	A
E		N										N		T
N	A	S	T	I	E	R		M	U	T	A	B	L	E
P				M		A		A		O		E		
E	X	C	E	P	T	I	O	N		P	E	T	E	R
C		A		L		D		A		K		W		U
K	O	R	E	A		E	N	G	I	N	E	E	R	S
E		I		N		R		E		O		E		E
D	E	B	A	T	E	S		R	A	T	I	N	G	S

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I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll make you pick up your trash . . .

IN SEARCH OF THE REAL THREE LITTLE PIGS

BY STEVEN WALDMAN

MY SEARCH FOR THE REAL "THREE Little Pigs" began after viewing a disturbing puppet show. I had taken my two-year-old son Joe to a production of the classic tale at a nearby park. In this rendition, the moral of the story was not that hard work will be rewarded, but that the wolf had been woefully misunderstood.

The wolf, it seems, had actually been pursuing the pigs so he could encourage them to pick up their litter. In their panic, the narrow-minded pigs mistakenly thought that the wolf was shouting, "I'll huff and I'll huff and blow your house in," when actually, it turns out, he was wheezing, "Enough, enough. I have to lay down." The wolf was tired from having to pick up all those recyclables.

Part of the cause of the confusion may have been that the wolf delivered his message in verse, accompanied by rap music. I took this to mean not only that "pigs" were ruining the environment, but that minorities get a raw deal.

I left the show thinking, this is Bill Bennett's worst nightmare. It's not that there's anything wrong with conservation and racial tolerance as lessons, but what was wrong with the old one about hard work and diligence?

I went to the library to find the "correct" version. In the first contemporary children's edition I took home, written by Glen Rounds in 1992, the wolf was appropriately wicked but the pigs didn't come close to getting their roles right. The third pig finds a brick house—already built. "It had a good strong door, and when the little pig went inside, he found there was even a fireplace and a big black kettle on the hearth."

The moral of this story seemed to be the importance of using a good realtor. "Remember, son," I could explain to Joe during a heartfelt father-son chat, "always remember to find out what conveys with the house."

I went back to the library. This time I got an edition written by James Marshall in 1989. This came closer to my memory. The first two pigs were, in fact, warned by the merchants that straw and sticks were not ideal building materials for houses, and the pigs disregarded the warnings with suitable arrogance. "Oh pooh," one said. "What would you know?"

But the author ruined it by making the third little pig a foppish chap with an elegant walking cane, derby, and British accent. "Capital idea my good fellow!" he said to the brick salesman. It was hard to admire the third pig. One suspected that he came to his fortune not by hard work but through good trust fund investments.

Enough is enough. Perhaps Bill Bennett was right. Perhaps we have to eschew the moral relativism of modern versions and return to the classics to get the good values. I found one from 19th century England, preserved more for students of folklore than modern toddlers.

But in this "original" version, no indication was given why pigs number one and two wanted to build the houses out of straw and sticks (i.e., they were frivolous and shortsighted). Nor did the merchants give any warning or advice; the pigs simply asked and got. Nor was there any mockery of the third pig.

STEVEN WALDMAN, *a contributing editor of* The Washington Monthly, *lives in a brick house in Washington, D.C.*

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The moral of that story seemed to be the importance of using sound construction materials. ("Remember, son, always follow building codes. . . .")

What's more, about two-thirds of the tale was devoted to how the pig played mind games with the wolf by promising to meet him at the fair but getting there early and rolling at him with a butter churn, etc. The detail seemed mostly to prove that the pig was capable of being as devious as the wolf.

Another 19th century version from Scotland, "The Three Wee Pigs," was also ethically ambiguous. The protagonists were called Dennis, Biddy, and Rex, and they were kicked out of the old sow's house because Dennis had accidentally stepped on one of the new piglets. They got caught in a horrible snow and rain storm; when Biddy saw a cart of straw he quickly built a house. Soon they bumped into a pig named Jimmie McLaughlin, "who was at school with Dennis." Jimmie felt sorry for them and gave them some wooden slats. ("Son, school is where you'll make the important connections.") Finally, a man came by with bricks and Rex built a house out of them. After the requisite huffing and puffing, the wolf knocks down the first two houses but gets stuck in the chimney of the brick house. "So they hooked him down the chimney, and cut him up into collops, and roasted him for their supper."

The story concludes confusedly. "But there are no houses up in the wood now, for the pigs were all taken to the old people's houses, and there they died." I'm not sure if that means the pigs were lovingly protected by the townspeople or shipped off to nursing homes to watch TV and play bingo. In any event, this version still didn't have the proper moral differentiation, since each pig seemed to have an equally sensible reason for using those materials. If you're in the middle of a snow storm and someone offers you some wood to build a house, you'd be quite sensible to accept.

So much for the conservative notion that we can only reclaim sound values if we return to the wholesome morality of the classics.

At this point, I started to doubt my own childhood memories. Maybe there never was a version preaching hard work and humility.

Just as I was giving up, I stumbled upon the Disney version of the "Three Little Pigs", produced in 1933. That was it! The first two pigs are explicitly depicted as frivolous. Pig number one, "Fifer Pig," sings, "I build my house of straw, I build my house of hay, I toot my flute, I don't give a hoot, I play around all day." The "Fiddler Pig" sings, "I build my house of sticks, I build my house of twigs. With a hey diddle diddle I play my fiddle and dance all kinds of jigs."

The dour third pig, named, none too subtly, "the Practical Pig," sings, "I build my house of stone, I build my house of bricks. I have no chance to sing and dance, because work and play don't mix." Piper

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and Fiddler are openly contemptuous of their brother but he reacts with mature self-confidence, shaking his trowel at them and singing, "You can play and laugh and fiddle. Don't think you can make me sore. I'll be safe and you'll be sorry when the wolf comes to your door." They mock him and then break into the famous rendition of the song, "Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf."

This was the tale I remembered. It emphasized not only frugality and perseverance but humility, since the arrogance of the pigs made their shortsightedness even more contemptible. It seems a bit ironic, given the current discussion about the wickedness of Hollywood, that I found my moral compass from Walt Disney's Hollywood studio.

How did Disney concoct this moralistic tale? It turns out there was at least one other "original" version of the "Three Little Pigs", according to an authoritative collection called *A Dictionary of British Folk Tales*, edited by Katherine O. Briggs. In this version, also told at least as far back as 19th century England, the language was explicitly moralistic.

In this case, the three pigs were Browny, who "spent most of his time rolling and wallowing about in the mud," Whitey, who was gluttonous and greedy, and "the youngest and best looking, Blacky," who is "a good, nice little pig, neither dirty nor greedy. He had nice dainty ways (for a pig), and his skin was always as smooth and shining as black satin."

One day the old sow tells her kids that before she dies she wants them to build houses and quizzes them on how they would do it. Browny says "a house of mud," to mom's disappointment. She asks Whitey. "'A house of cabbage,' answers Whitey, with a mouth full, and scarcely raising her snout out of the trough in which she was grubbing for some potato-parings."

"Foolish, foolish child!" said the mother pig. Finally she asked Blacky, who says, "A house of brick, please mother, as it will be warm in winter and cool in summer, and safe all the year round."

The predator in this version is a fox, not a wolf. The fox quickly burrows his way through the mud-walls—no huffing or puffing—and carries poor Browny "off with him to his den." The fox then eats through the cabbage walls and carries poor "trembling, shivering" Whitey away to join her brother.

When the fox fails to scratch through the brick wall, he goes down the chimney and gets captured, boiled, and eaten. The ending has a certain *Silence of the Lambs* quality, as Blacky goes to rescue his siblings. "As he approached the den he heard piteous grunts and squeals from his poor little brother and sister who lived in constant terror of the fox killing and eating them." He busts them out, they joyfully thank him, and they live happily ever after in Blacky's brick house.

In case the moral is not yet clear, the story ends, "And Browny quite gave up rolling in the mud and Whitey ceased to be greedy, for they never forgot how nearly these faults had brought them to an untimely end."

Disney, it seems, combined the basic plot devices of the first two 19th century versions—huffing, puffing, wolves, straw, sticks—with the clear moral dictates of the third.

Clearly, different generations and communities have adapted the tales to the moment. I can criticize the amorality of that first old version, but back in 19th century England, at the dawn of the industrial revolution, it was undoubtedly quite important to teach kids the value of intelligence, perhaps even more than hard work.

It is similarly significant that the Disney version was released in 1933, the heart of the Great Depression. In that moment, it made sense to emphasis not braininess (look at all those smart men jumping out of buildings on Wall Street) but frugality and self-restraint. Indeed, hard work and common sense were democratic virtues of the working class, in contrast to the gluttony and glitz that had failed the aristocracy in the roaring twenties.

Perhaps the 1980s and 1990s have spawned so many versions—so many of them amoral—because it is a period of relative affluence. It's a bit hard to see the downside of gluttony as we run up thousands of dollars of credit card debt without any obvious negative consequences.

But this attitude is ultimately no more sensible for us than it was for old mud-lovin' Browny or cabbage-faced Whitey in the 1800s or "Fiddler Pig" in the Depression. In fact, as both national and consumer debt has grown, imposing ever greater burdens on the next generations, the lessons about frugality seem more, not less, important.

It's obviously up to us, as parents, to decide which morals we want to emphasize. I'm playing it safe. In the version I tell my son, the pigs learn to: work hard; use durable construction materials; be nice to their siblings; be humble; and listen carefully to their mother sow. Of course, right now his favorite part is when I huff and puff and blow his hair off his forehead. I'm not sure what to make of that. Perhaps he simply recognizes that daddies, like fairy tales, are full of wisdom and hot air. ●

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Returning Fire in the P.C. War

Lawrence Levine says the academic right doesn't have a leg to stand on

By Nicholas Lemann

THE OPENING OF THE AMERICAN MIND: Canons, Culture, and History
By Lawrence W. Levine
Beacon Press, $20

THIS IS SUPPOSED TO BE the riposte to all those bestselling conservative books attacking political correctness at universities—the shelf that begins with Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind*, which was published in 1987 and whose title Lawrence Levine has chosen to mirror.

Levine, an eminent American historian, is at his best when he's debunking the debunkers of academe. He points out, first, that they paint with an extremely broad brush. The P.C. wars tend to pit lefty scholars against centrist-to-conservative popular intellectuals. Because the latter group, in pursuing its mission of upholding standards, doesn't have to meet academic standards of evidence, sweeping, unsupported generalizations—part of what Levine calls "a culture of hyperbole"—are the order of the day.

When Charles (*Profscam*) Sykes pronounces "tens of thousands of books and hundreds of thousands of journal articles" to be "worthless," Levine wants to know, legitimately, whether that's a conclusion he reached after reading them. In book after book, Molefi Asante, the engaging, voluble, and intellectually unreliable father of Afrocentrism, is unfairly presented as fairly representing the entire multicultural movement. All of social history—the effort to understand the lives of ordinary people in the past, whose practitioners include Levine himself—is typically caricatured as "victimology." African culture is discussed in shockingly dismissive terms, such as "the unrewarding gyrations of barbarous tribes in picturesque but irrelevant corners of the globe" (Hugh Trevor-Roper). Curriculum disputes are presented as historically unprecedented ideological assaults on what Levine calls "the Natural Order," when they are actually a "long-standing tradition in the academe" that conservatives have always taken part in too.

Levine presents what would be called in a university a "counter-narrative" to that of the anti-P.C. forces. The university curriculum, he points out, consisted exclusively of works from the classical period until late in the 19th century. Not only that, the writings of Homer and Plato were taught not as sublime explorations of humanity and morality, but as the basis of grammar lessons. Bloody battles were required to get Shakespeare and Milton into the canon and to have great books understood as literature. The notion of a "Western culture," whose main repository is a core of great books, dates only from the time of the First World War.

During the early Cold War period the curriculum changed in the direction of celebrating the distinctive greatness of American politics and culture. The problem with this particular new academic order was that it ignored those aspects of the American experience that involved conflict, injustice, or people outside the leadership ranks, and also virtually everything about the Third World. Dissenting views were not well tolerated. Fortunately, during the 1960s an academic Golden Age began, in which truly free inquiry was permitted to flower at the same time that the campus gates were opened to a much more diverse and representative population.

That is Levine's version of the story. The problem is that it's too pat: As is the case in debate tournaments and lawsuits but not in real life, the other side is 100 percent wrong and has no legitimate concerns. It isn't until page 162 of a 174-page book that Levine introduces the first note of acknowledgment that there may be complexities in the situation: "To be sure, all

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the contemporary scholars who have studied these areas are by no means unanimous in their assessment of the issues I have raised here." He goes on to devote a short phrase to each of the leading smart, non-blunderbuss anti-P.C. arguments, and concludes, in a tinnily cheerful tone, "Such constructive and informed critiques create the basis for an exciting and fruitful debate that will sharpen our inquiry into the nature of American identity, diversity, and commonality."

This debate is already going on in academe, and it's too bad Levine felt he had to keep it off stage in his book. Today the elite research universities are orthodoxly left-wing to a far lesser extent than 25 years ago, and the real bastions of the kind of political climate the conservatives are complaining about are schools two or three levels down the academic food chain. This indicates that the successor trend to political correctness has probably already begun and will be working its way through the system in the coming years. Part of what was driving P.C. all along was not ideology but careerism: Because the United States is overcommitted to the model of the research university, everybody who wants a career in higher education has to write a dissertation that claims to make a unique contribution to human knowledge. There are so many more aspiring professors than good thesis topics that it creates constant pressure to keep declaring more written material to be literature, and more past events to be history. Soon the well of women-and-minority literature and social history will begin to run dry and another hidden reservoir of subject matter will have to be found—and it, in turn, will begin to generate papers for presentation at the Modern Language Association convention that have easy-to-make-fun-of titles and angrily denounce the previous generation of scholarly work.

It's as if Levine is worried that if he doesn't make his case appear to be extremely simple, he won't be able to win converts.

It's true that scholarly change is constant and shouldn't be regarded as either preventable or threatening. However, Levine segues imperceptibly from there to the idea that because the general process is healthy, every particular must be healthy too; his implication is that anyone who objects to a specific change is really expressing hostility to change itself. Levine would have been much more reassuring if he had convinced us that he could be toughminded toward the main academic trend of the past 30 years, or had bothered to answer the serious objections to it, even as he was making it sound salutary overall.

Specifically, if you remove all the hysteria, ahistoricism, inaccuracy, exaggeration, and ideological tendentiousness from the anti-P.C. side's argument (and Levine is right, doing that is a big job), two valid concerns remain, both arising from academics' desire to recast the past into a more inspirational form. One is with truth-telling and the other with relativism.

Once scholars declare a previously unexamined subject area to be fruitful and begin to explore it, they ought to do so with ruthless intellectual honesty. But there is a clear strain in social history of celebration of the forgotten folk of the past. For example, slave society in the South is a great subject for historical research, but some of the resulting writing has a propagandizing tone, a tendency to define itself as a search for "strengths" rather than "weaknesses." The best-known such volume, Herbert Gutman's *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom*, openly announced this as its mission. People who explore the primary records of the past ought to be able to be relied upon to report inconvenient findings as well as heartening ones.

The problem with relativism is that it can extend to the position that all past figures and events are of equal importance, and all literary and artistic works are equally deserving of detailed examination. Much of the thrill of learning comes from the sense of being connected to the main, and heretofore obscure, patterns in civilization. Levine is good at pointing out the flaws of excessive absolutism about historical importance and literary quality, but if he also thinks there is a danger in excessive relativism, he doesn't say so. His view seems to be that American culture, at least, is best understood as a series of subcultures with no real main culture. Therefore, he makes the study of presidencies, wars, national crises, and diplomacy look like a completely played-out vein, which it isn't.

Dinesh D'Souza, in *Illiberal Education*, made the cynical but damaging point that there is a fit between

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curriculum and research disputes in universities, and admissions and hiring policies. Challenging the concepts of importance and excellence as they are applied to the past in scholarship has a second, indirect purpose: It helps to undermine the use of the same concepts in the filling of slots in the contemporary university, and thus to justify hiring on the basis of race and gender rather than pure merit. Levine is so determined to put a happy, unthreatening face on the diversification of faculties, student bodies, and curricula that he doesn't bring up D'Souza's charge at all—which means he also doesn't refute it. It's as if he is worried that if he doesn't make his case appear extremely simple, he won't be able to win converts.

At one point in *The Opening of the American Mind*, Levine appears to call for an updated version of that old and much derided historical chestnut, the frontier thesis: "[C]ontemporary explanations help clarify those very American characteristics that so excited Frederick Jackson Turner: the sense of eternal rebirth, the ever vital process of becoming, the insistence on being free from the confines of the past, the receptivity to change and newness. . . . Perhaps the true American frontier has not been land and space, but the *people*: those who were already here when the first Europeans and Africans came to these shores and who have come continuously ever since."

Because Levine's book is dedicated to Richard Hoftstadter, this passage brought to mind Hofstadter's demolition of Frederick Jackson Turner in *The Age of Reform*: Hofstadter used agricultural records to prove that the frontier hadn't ended when Turner said it had. It's an inspiring section in Hofstadter's book, because it represents the defeat of Turner's commencement-address, character-building approach to history by real historical research and a commitment to telling the truth about the past. No doubt Levine's goal is the same as Hofstadter's (hence the dedication), but *The Opening of the American Mind* does not stand as incontrovertible proof of that. ●

Unemployed Underclass

Without jobs, blacks in the ghetto have no way out

By David Whitman

WHEN WORK DISAPPEARS: The World of the New Urban Poor
By William Julius Wilson
Knopf, $26

TWENTY YEARS AGO THIS month, I sat in a University of Chicago classroom as an obscure sociologist in horn-rimmed glasses droned on about American race relations. The professor, a man named William Julius Wilson, was speaking with all the animation of a metronome to about a dozen students. Wilson methodically explained that he was going to teach from the manuscript of his book, which would come out the following school year, *The Declining Significance of Race*. Pipe in hand, wearing a natty sweater vest, Bill Wilson then proceeded to discourse at length about "structural barriers" and the "shifts in economic life chances" that were altering the system of "racial stratification."

Over the course of the semester, Wilson's elocution failed to improve a whit. Yet for all his sociological jargon, one couldn't help but be provoked by Wilson's then-unorthodox ideas. He believed the liberal establishment was wrong to attribute the plight of impoverished blacks simply to racism. He warned that shifts in the job market were opening a destructive gap in the black community between the middle class and those left behind in the ghetto. And he thought that civil rights leaders should look beyond affirmative action programs toward social programs that benefited disadvantaged whites as well.

Wilson's class changed my life. I went on to a career of covering race, welfare reform, and urban policy. But of far more consequence, Wilson went on to change almost singlehandedly the national debate over why the urban underclass exists and what can be done about it. He is now the nation's best-known expert on race, the left-wing sociologist whom Bill Clinton regularly consults and whom Ted Koppel

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invited to appear on "Nightline" to critique the new welfare reform bill. An excerpt from his new book, *When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor*, has made the cover of *The New York Times Magazine*. Other accolades, including an admiring profile in the *New Yorker*, are stacking up, even though Wilson is still sound-bite challenged.

The unique contribution of Wilson's book is that it provides the first attempt in three decades to marry evidence from large-scale scientific surveys in the ghetto with information culled from "ethnographic" interviews of ghetto residents. To appreciate the reasons for that research hiatus—and its profound influence on Wilson's book—one needs to look back both to Daniel Patrick Moynihan's 1965 report on the black family and the firestorm Wilson himself ignited with the 1978 publication of *The Declining Significance of Race*.

Ever since the release of the Moynihan report, the all-important question in the mind of almost every reporter and scholar who writes about the plight of the ghetto poor is this: Do you "blame the victim" or do you blame society for the presence of the underclass? The phrase "blaming the victim" was itself coined by a white sociologist named William Ryan as a means of denouncing the Moynihan report, even though, ironically, Moynihan explicitly blamed white America and its discriminatory policies for the "tangle of pathology" that was at the heart of the breakdown of ghetto families. Nonetheless, Moynihan's blunt talk about out-of-wedlock childbearing—and the links he drew to unemployment, crime, and welfare—provoked the ire of civil rights leaders and the black intelligentsia. Within a matter of weeks of publication of the Moynihan report, the study of family breakdown in the ghetto became verboten. Large-scale research in the ghetto vanished, most white academics stopped examining questions of race and family breakdown, and for a decade or so numerous black scholars even penned paeans to the adaptive virtues of single-parent families.

When Wilson published *The Declining Significance of Race*, he too was denounced. The book's title infuriated many black scholars who thought race and race alone was a sufficient explanation for the plight of the ghetto poor. His critics claimed that Wilson's de-emphasis of modern-day racism provided ammunition for conservatives intent on blaming the poor for their misery, even though Wilson was then a social democrat who favored Western European-style social policies and central planning. Critics organized a conference at the University of Pennsylvania to present research rebutting the book; after the book won a prestigious award from the American Association of Sociologists, the Association of Black Sociologists filed a formal protest. Wilson, who was a mentor of sorts at the time, told me that a number of sociologists who signed the protest later confessed that they had never read his book.

Still, Wilson was scalded by the nasty, personal attacks. He was infuriated that some Republicans and members of the press thought he was a conservative, and he set out in his next book, *The Truly Disadvantaged*, to repair his image and offer his own analysis of ghetto poverty. Only after *The Truly Disadvantaged* appeared in 1987 did Wilson become a darling of the left. In the book, Wilson articulated what would become the liberal antidote to Charles Murray's and Ronald Reagan's claims that welfare programs were fostering dependency and illegitimacy in the ghetto. The urban underclass, Wilson argued, resulted from structural changes in the economy that were, among other things, driving low-wage manufacturing jobs from urban to suburban areas, leaving millions of men in the inner city without work. And as the comparatively well-paid manufacturing jobs moved away from the ghetto, so too did upwardly mobile blacks, leaving poor blacks more isolated than before.

Wilson's current book tests his hypotheses about the urban underclass by asking some 2,500 residents of Chicago's inner city what keeps the poor poor. Researchers working under Wilson's direction also interviewed close to 200 employers of inner-city workers from the Chicago area to see why minorities, especially black men from the inner city, have had so much trouble getting hired and keeping jobs.

Making abundant use of long quotes from ghetto residents, Wilson's new book is much grittier than his earlier work. Quote after quote confirms the existence of Moynihan's "tangle of pathology." In fact, Wilson's inner-city residents talk far more openly about the importance of individual character and culture than academicians and journalists who write about the underclass. One woman who was on welfare for 13 years confessed that it made her "lazy"; a mother laments that her 9-year-old son was beaten every day after school because he would not join a gang. Other residents assert that most black men in their neighborhood are shiftless or into drugs and alcohol.

One of the most startling findings of Wilson's research is that Chicago's black employers are every bit as negative toward inner-city black workers as are white employers. They complain that black males from the ghetto are lazy, dismiss certain jobs as beneath them, are often late or absent from work, and

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often fail drug tests. If white scholars or black conservatives made the same assertions publicly, they would be trashed as racists or Uncle Toms.

Wilson, however, steadfastly insists that most of this dysfunctional behavior stems from persistent joblessness—which itself results largely from the shift from an urban manufacturing-dominated economy to a suburban service-dominated economy. His fear that conservatives, journalists, or members of the public will use tales of "ghetto-related behaviors" to blame the poor for their plight is palpable. As a consequence, he overstates his case at times and plays down some troubling questions about personal responsibility and ethnic or cultural traditions.

Wilson is at his most eloquent in establishing that today's ghettos contain a new form of urban poverty. A critical element distinguishing yesteryear's ghettos from today's is that now most adults in the inner cities no longer work in a typical week. In the "Bronzeville" section of Chicago depicted in St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton's classic *Black Metropolis*, 70 percent of the males worked in a typical week in 1950; by 1990, only 37 percent did so. The old ghettos were poor and segregated—but they were much better off than today's poor and segregated neighborhoods in which few people work.

Work, as Wilson says, "is not simply a way to make a living." In the absence of regular employment, he points out, "a person lacks not only a place in which to work . . . but also a coherent organization of the present—that is, a system of concrete expectations and goals . . . [A job] determines where you are going to be and when you are going to be there." As work opportunities diminished in the ghetto, an ugly cycle began. Unemployed men—rejected by women who wanted a mate who could support them—hung out on street corners, creating a sense of chaos in the neighborhood. More single mothers turned to welfare for support. Youngsters grew up without working fathers or the awareness that work was a central expectation of adult life. Sensing their limited opportunities, many youths failed to develop good work habits or turned to drugs and gangs. People had less money to spend, local stores closed down. And on and on.

The disintegration of the modern-day ghetto was speeded by the departure of the black elite, who once had been forced by segregation to cater to a black clientele. The doctors' offices, the laundromats, the drugstores, the cleaners—all the local stores that had made for thriving commercial strips closed in droves or were abandoned. In 1986, Chicago's North Lawndale neighborhood had a population of over 66,000 people and a grand total of one bank and one supermarket. But it had 99 liquor stores and bars.

Blacks in the ghetto face other, more subtle barriers that other inner-city minorities, especially Mexicans, are less likely to confront. Many employers in Chicago prefer newly arrived Mexican immigrants to black workers. The Mexican workers arrive with a family in tow and are suddenly, even in a minimum wage job, grateful to be making much more money than they did back home. At work, the Mexican laborer hears about job openings and refers friends and family members. Carpooling to work in the tightly-knit Mexican community is common. At home, a wife and extended family make child care and household duties much easier, too. By contrast, employers often disdain black workers, inner-city blacks have few employed friends to inform them of job openings, transportation is often undependable, and mothers have few adults to rely on if problems arise with their children.

Wilson's point, in short, is that most middle-class Americans cannot imagine the daily perverse realities and pressures of the ghetto. That's an important reminder for readers and armchair analysts ready to condemn the poor as slothful. Unemployment, segregation, inferior schools, and one-parent families all matter. Groups of idle men congregating on the corners and race riots do not mar the streets of Scarsdale.

Still, Wilson's effort to depict ghetto residents as the pawns of structural change, or of the unhealthy cultural mores that stem from those changes, goes too far. In Wilson's book, people in the ghetto often act badly because they are "compelled" to by economic circumstances. In real life that's sometimes the case and sometimes not. It's hard, for example, to accept that some ghetto residents are compelled to knock down old ladies on the El station platform in order to steal their pension checks, as one woman interviewed for Wilson's book relates.

In fact, the theory that joblessness is the root of the modern-day ghetto leaves many questions unanswered. Wilson notes that Western European nations have more unemployment than the U.S. and that unemployment rates for immigrant minorities have ranged from 25 to 50 percent in many European cities since the 1970s. But if joblessness is at the root of the modern-day ghetto, why has no European city developed a ghetto as isolated and violent as those in America?

The hitch in Wilson's explanation is that he can't demonstrate a causal connection. Some X-factor other than joblessness may be at the heart of the ghetto's trans-

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formation during the last half-century. As it happens, his book presents an obvious candidate: the breakdown of ghetto families. Out-of-wedlock childbearing among poor blacks exploded at the same time Wilson's "new urban poverty" took hold. And Wilson's joblessness theory doesn't account for more than a small portion of that unhappy revolution. Ever since Wilson wrote *The Truly Disadvantaged*, scholars have tried to test his "marriageable pool" theory, which is shorthand for the notion that marriage declined in the ghetto because there were fewer desirable (read "employed") available men. Study after study, including those by liberal academics, has shown the rise in joblessness doesn't explain the drop in marriage rates.

No chapter in Wilson's book is more disturbing than his discussion of the black inner-city family. His book might well have been called *When Marriage Disappears*. Only 17 percent of black families with kids who live at home are headed by a married couple in Chicago's ghetto neighborhoods—compared to almost 80 percent among Mexican families. As Moynihan warned three decades ago, children who grow up without fathers at home in a community where fathers are largely absent live in communities that collapse.

A critical element separating yesteryear's ghettos from today's is that now most adults in the inner city no longer work in a typical week.

Wilson reports that Mexican families come to Chicago with a clear conception of a traditional family with a breadwinner father. They are ashamed to have a daughter who gets pregnant out of wedlock. By contrast, inner-city blacks almost scorn marriage. "Black women routinely say they distrust men and feel strongly that black men lack dedication to their families," writes Wilson. Black men in the ghetto are also "extremely suspicious" of black women. Wilson quotes from several interviews with young fathers who complain that getting married would cut down "on hanging with the fellows all day"; another unmarried dad explains that "most black men feel now, why get married when you got six to seven womens to one guy?" It is a common occurrence, Wilson reports, for black men in the inner city to father at least three children out-of-wedlock with three separate women.

It's hard to imagine a government program, or for that matter a structural change in the economy, that will make blacks in the ghetto eager to marry again. Wilson's policy agenda is a bit of a liberal wish list, one that reflects his long-held belief that only a multiracial coalition can push progressive legislation through the Congress. He calls for passage of universal healthcare, an expanded earned income tax credit paid out on a monthly basis, and national performance standards for schools. Several of his proposed solutions are specific to the ghetto: He wants to create more job-placement centers in the inner city, and more privately subsidized car pools and van pools to drive inner-city workers to jobs in the suburbs.

However, his chief recommendation, to paraphrase former homeless advocate Robert Hayes, can be summed up in three words: jobs, jobs, jobs. Wilson endorses the guaranteed jobs program advanced by journalist Mickey Kaus, a kind of modern-day update to FDR's Works Progress Administration. Under Kaus's plan, the government would offer a job to any American who wanted one at a sub-minimum wage. The scheme is expensive—about $12 billion for every one million jobs created, according to Wilson. He would have workers perform public jobs that aren't currently being performed for budgetary reasons. Wilson suggests collecting trash twice a week, opening libraries on Saturdays and evenings, and providing supervision at municipal parks and playgrounds.

Wilson acknowledges that Congress isn't going to bring back the WPA anytime soon. Clinton himself has already retreated from his 1992 campaign pledge to provide government jobs for welfare recipients who "play by the rules" but can't find work after their two-year stint on cash assistance ends.

Yet Wilson's analysis is right, the problems of the inner city are going to get worse before they get better. As businesses and middle-class blacks continue to flee the ghetto, it will become that much meaner. Perhaps, a decade from now, if urban unrest and violent crime rise, a new president with a smaller budget deficit will enact a large public jobs program. Wilson is sanguine that inner-city neighborhoods can one

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day be turned around. In his post-reform world, adults would start to work, crime and drug use would subside, and the welfare rolls would shrink. Belatedly, the culture of the ghetto would abate.

There's good reason to think that a guaranteed jobs program would transform the lives of ghetto residents. As Kaus has put it, work works. Still, it may not work to restore every institution, especially the frayed families of inner-city blacks. On that score, one can only hope that Wilson's optimism about the government's capacity to strengthen families is right. Yes, jobs matter. But so do fathers. ●

They're Here, They're Queer—We're Used To It

In the 1990s, even Republicans are beginning to realize gay is OK

By John Cloud

A GOOD WAY TO SUMMARIZE society's stunning, if almost imperceptibly slow, transformation on the question of homosexuality is this: In the 1990s, one can be famous, not infamous, for being gay.

If you think I exaggerate the shift, consider that as late as 1988, Democratic nominee Michael Dukakis turned down the offer of a *$1 million* lesbian and gay fund-raising campaign to be organized in part by a gay consultant and long-time left-wing activist, David Mixner. The Dukakis campaign's refusal went mostly unnoticed.

Four years later, Mixner's friend Bill Clinton would openly solicit gay and lesbian donations and would mention, for the first time ever, the word "gay" in his convention acceptance speech. And just last year, a Republican presidential campaign's refusal of a gay group's contribution became giant news, even before Robert Dole flip-flopped and personally directed his operatives to accept the money.

Before a few years ago, journalists rarely spoke of gays and lesbians who weren't "gay *activists*." Regular gay folks—even Hollywood moguls and members of Congress and corporate executives—remained in a closet they created and the media helped maintain.

STRANGER AMONG FRIENDS
By David Mixner
Bantam, $22.95

THE ACCIDENTAL ACTIVIST: A Personal and Political Memoir
By Candace Gingrich with Chris Bull
Scribner, $23

HOUSE AND HOME
By Steve Gunderson and Rob Morris with Bruce Bower
Dutton, $24.95

AIDS would shove many from the closet—not just those who succumbed to it but their friends who felt guilty about remaining silent. For example, in his new memoir, openly gay Republican Rep. Steve Gunderson (Wis.) writes, "My friends and fellow gay men were dying, and here I was, a leader of the party of Jesse Helms and Strom Thurmond, doing too little to combat their antigay rhetoric."

Now there is another openly gay Republican in Congress, Rep. Jim Kolbe (Ariz.), along with two openly gay Democrats. The cover of a recent *Entertainment Weekly* announced that prime-time television will feature 22 gay characters this season. Famous gay entertainers and writers and businesspeople are coming out almost every day, it seems, a torrent that continues to normalize homosexuality in the American mind.

As the carapace of silence erodes, the rhetoric of activism is growing more foreign to the gay and lesbian experience. Just as today we rarely speak of "black leaders" in civil rights-era terms, the combination of social, political, and cultural forces building erratically toward gay equality surely can no longer be ascribed to any directed "action," however vigorous, for gay

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"rights." It owes much more to parents discovering that their children are gay, employees learning that their bosses are gay, and voters learning that their (Republican!) members of Congress are gay. The collective national shock accompanying the revelation that Rock Hudson was gay did more to focus attention on homosexuality than a decade of activism before it. Now there is no shock when famous people come out, only the constant reminder of a truth central to the advancement of gay equality: Homosexuality is a social fact, not a political stance.

Three new memoirs illustrate these changes usefully. David Mixner's *Stranger Among Friends* chronicles the life of a full-fledged '60s-era activist, complete with heavy LSD use, physical scars from the 1968 Chicago convention, and an all-encompassing leftist politics. Candace Gingrich's appropriately named *The Accidental Activist* details an entirely different experience with the gay movement. Since reporters discovered her lesbianism in 1994, Gingrich has become less an activist than a symbol. Finally, Steve Gunderson is not an activist at all—the very term is anathema to the farm-raised conservative. Yet the national attention surrounding Gunderson's long-delayed disclosure of his homosexuality jostled Americans' feelings about sexual orientation more than any March on Washington could. The movement for gay equality, in short, no longer looks like a movement at all. It's beginning to look like an inevitability.

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The Intentional Activist

For David Mixner, activism was salvation. Growing up in late 1950s and early 1960s rural New Jersey, Mixner longed to leave the hardscrabble, workaday farm life of his parents for the outside world and "the fight for freedom"—the incipient civil rights and New Left movements.

Mixner says in the memoir that he contemplated suicide at age 8 because he believed his homosexuality was evil. By the time he reached Arizona State University he had begun experimenting with drugs. (By the 1980s, he kept only narcotics in his freezer.)

Mixner has survived more than his share of tragedy, including a nervous breakdown and the death in a car accident of his first lover. AIDS has annihilated more than 200 of his friends. (Mixner meticulously keeps a death count.) Through it all, political activism gave him a reason to keep going. His cafeteria politics led him from civil rights to Eugene McCarthy to Vietnam War opposition to the anti-nuclear movement and, finally, to gay rights. *Stranger Among Friends* doesn't take these movements very seriously, opting instead for tedious remembrances of the internal workings of various organizations. Mixner had an important supporting role in '60s politics, but he doesn't grapple with the ideas of his era. Like many activists of his generation, Mixner sees a political solution to just about any problem. This sentiment reaches a preposterous apotheosis with Mixner's assertion that his friend Bill Clinton, should he ever become president, could "set the gay and lesbian community free."

Mixner and Clinton had met through mutual antiwar acquaintances and stayed in touch off and on until 1992, when Clinton, hunting for gay votes, gave Mixner a campaign position. In the gay community, Mixner not only helped raise millions of dollars for Clinton but spoke in reverent terms about him: "With him, we could not only win back the White House but also our dreams, our hopes, and our lives."

Of course, Clinton could not live up to Mixner's wild expectations: He couldn't even overturn the ban on gays in the military, much less end the social opprobrium at the heart of gay inequality. No president—no political system, for that matter—could. For Mixner, though, political realities don't matter. Because Clinton accepted the military compromise forced by antigay elements within both parties in Congress and the Pentagon, Mixner has attacked Clinton repeatedly, even as other gay liberals such as Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass.) defended the President.

The book concludes with Clinton and Mixner achieving an uneasy truce. But in staying true to his activist principles, Mixner lost influence in the White House—influence that might have helped gays and lesbians win more modest, and realistic, achievements.

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The Poster Girl

A generation younger than Mixner—a generation that makes all the difference—Candace Gingrich grew up indifferent to politics. She spent her mostly carefree childhood playing sports and chopping the hair from her Barbie dolls. Even coming out to her parents—the presumably conservative mother and stepfather of Newt Gingrich—was relatively easy.

In fact, it turns out that the Gingriches, Candace included, are largely apolitical folks. In *The Accidental Activist*, we see a different kind of activism emerge, one based on the social interactions of everyday gay life.

Gingrich recognizes from the first page that she was "born into" gay activism. Before 1994, she lived near her parents in central Pennsylvania, worked at United Parcel Service, and played rugby—ignoring politics even after her half-brother won national recognition. Because so much of her 30 years has been uneventful, the idea of her memoir is a little foolish: To fill its pages, she has authored an entire chapter on rugby and another that begins, "When it came to actually knowing how to perform in bed. . . ." (Bored readers can entertain themselves by wondering how Newt Gingrich must react to the passages about his half-sister's clitoris.) Other pages, laden with pop music and movie references, offer aphorisms such as, "Hard work and aggressiveness can overcome perceived weaknesses and even the most daunting of odds."

Beyond its general ridiculousness, *The Accidental Activist* is a book at war with itself. On one hand, we have Candy, the hard-working, football-loving, beer-swilling woman who courageously carved out a life in small-town America as a proud, uncompromising lesbian. And on the other hand, there's Candace, "serious lesbian activist," employing silly leftist rhetoric that's far less "revolutionary" than the life she led before a Washington gay-rights group came knocking.

Gingrich oscillates between these characters for most of the book. On one page, she says hers is "the story of *family*," and how we should all try to "get along." She says her sister Susan's membership in the Christian Coalition is "a reminder for me to avoid stereotyping the group's membership. Like gays and lesbians, Christian Coalition members are everywhere. They are us." Just so.

But on the next page, she is saying that Newt helped make her government "a monstrous vermin." The boilerplate leftist rhetoric sounds stilted on her lips. Even on gay issues, her positions have the tone of someone who's read them in a pamphlet.

But the book's major failing is that Gingrich makes no attempt to dissect and fully understand her half-brother's views, on homosexuality or anything else. Newt, who is a generation older than Candace, remains a stranger to her. Not that Newt cooperated—Candace spent months unsuccessfully attempting to "interview" her brother for the book. To discuss his opinions, she must quote newspaper articles and a biography of him. You want Candace to talk to Newt, reason with him, and she never has.

The Gay Man Next Door

More a sibling to Newt Gingrich than Candace is Steve Gunderson, who says, "Newt was instrumental in my coming to terms with my homosexuality." Gingrich knew Gunderson was gay even in the early 1980s, and though many of his supporters were antigay, Gingrich "made it clear to everyone that he trusted me, enjoyed my company, respected my judgment, and considered me a friend." Gunderson and Gingrich have talked much more about homosexuality than Candace and Newt have. And unlike Mixner, Gunderson felt no alienation from the American system, even as a young gay man growing up on a dairy farm.

For years, however, Gunderson adamantly refused to come out publicly. Even after he and spouse Rob Morris began attending Washington functions together (including two White House dinners as well as gay and lesbian fund-raisers), Gunderson tried to hide his homosexuality in Wisconsin. Thus he squandered his great power to influence the nation—to teach Americans that anyone can be gay. Indeed, in the end, Gunderson's coming-out would win him a national spotlight—a book contract, glowing press, TV appearances.

Odd as it may seem, Gunderson represents the future of the gay movement, for several reasons: He understands that the biggest problem confronting American gays and lesbians today is ignorance, not hatred—a message Mixner can't understand and "serious lesbian activist" Gingrich ignores. Gunderson's memoir is a paean to the careful reasoning and calm education it will take to eradicate bigotry.

Now that Gunderson is fulfilling his pledge to retire from Congress after this session, one only hopes that he won't shy away from that task. Recently, he told supporters not to conduct a write-in campaign on his behalf because Gingrich had told him that right-wingers would smear him with false rumors. He shouldn't have given up so easily. Traditional activism may be less relevant to gay people today, but only because the silence is ending. ●

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Dixie Redux

The North won the battle, but the South may have won the war

By Jon Meacham

DIXIE RISING: How the South is Shaping American Values, Politics and Culture
By Peter Applebome
Times Books, $25

THE OLD MAN'S EYES WERE watery, his Coke can half-empty, the soggy Garcia y Vega cigar unlit. He grimaced, and shifted his gaunt frame, awkwardly adjusting his synthetic gray suit coat. George Wallace was in pain, of course; had been, constantly, since that day in 1972 when a would-be assassin fired five bullets into him. It was an autumn morning last year—the kind of warm but brisk Southern fall day natives call "sweater weather"—and I was in Montgomery to meet the ancient former Alabama governor. The voice that had once so effectively taunted "pointy-headed pseudo-intellectuals who can't park their bicycles straight" was gone now, replaced by the hoarsest of whispers; disease had gnawed away at his throat.

But glory was not far from his mind—or his gaze. Dominating the office was a huge oil portrait of a virile Wallace in his prime. His hair was coal-black, slicked into a pompadour; he wore a skinny, early sixties tie; most important, he stood before a blood-red Alabama flag and the gubernatorial seal. And so history blended with legend, as it does so often in the old Confederacy. The fact of the old man trapped in a steel wheelchair, rasping out words, dueled with the mythic image of power. I was there to try to reconstruct how Wallace had played the press, and I asked him whether, with the benefit of years, he thought national reporters had had the story of the South in the fifties and sixties right. Did they get it? "I don't think they ever understood the South," he wheezed, pulling at his can of Coca-Cola. "Course, they understood more after I ran for president. They understood a lot more then."

That is dead-on history. It's become something of a cliche to point out that the South may have really won the Civil War: The center of political power has moved, along with millions of people, from the Northeast corridor and the industrial Midwest to the shiny suburbs of the Sunbelt. States' rights has become respectable: Now it's called "devolution." The fire-eating rhetoric that led to Sumter is now relatively common, even in moderate Democratic circles. Meanwhile, Southerners dominate politics: The President is an Arkansan, the vice president a Tennessean, the speaker of the House a Georgian, the Senate majority leader a Mississippian. And so to understand America, you must first understand the South.

That is Peter Applebome's thesis, and there are few journalists at work in the country today better qualified to take us South again, and to try to make sense of the nation's most perplexing—and now most important—place. The veteran Atlanta bureau chief of *The New York Times*, Applebome is a diligent reporter and an elegant writer. His knowing dispatches have long educated national readers about the land of Carter and Clinton, a region particularly susceptible to quick, and confusing, caricature. (This is a culture, after all, that gave us both *To Kill a Mockingbird* and "The Dukes of Hazzard.") For people still attempting to dope out what, exactly, is "Southern," or whether there is a "New South," or whether there is still a distinctive regional identity lurking in a world, as Applebome puts it, of Bennigan's and Blockbusters, this book is the perfect primer.

It joins a large literature on just these questions. (The South and its native sons are nothing if not self-absorbed.) The best, perhaps, is John Egerton's 1973 book *The Americanization of Dixie: The Southernization of America*. As Applebome notes, the second half of the title is much-overlooked, but is actually more intriguing now: The country's habits of life and mind are increasingly Southern. You may not drawl, but you think, and live, a lot like those of us (I'm from Chattanooga) who do. People in Hartford or Sacramento can deny it all they like, but a growing majority of Americans share Southern characteristics:—they are basically decent, anxious not to be bothered either by government or other "outsiders," and all too vulnerable to giving into their worst instincts toward racism and bigotry. For over a century, it's been generally

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thought that the redemption of the South would come only when it adopted the customs of the North. But today the country could learn important lessons from Southern history, and from Southerners.

The region must be dealt with; the numbers demand it. Applebome musters an impressive roster of statistics. Between 1970 and 1990, the 11 states of the old Confederacy grew at twice the national rate, which in turn increased the South's congressional base—it's gained 17 seats in the House since 1960, while states like New York and Massachusetts have lost representation. Applebome makes an interesting point about the electoral college—a presidential candidate could now win the White House by carrying precisely the same states Nixon did when he lost to John Kennedy in 1960. There is popular culture, too: Nashville is now churning out middle-class hits, and Applebome notes that family vacation spots like Orlando and Myrtle Beach are the Catskills and Coney Islands of the nineties. Then there's the cash flow. In 1993, over half of the nation's new jobs were created in the South; eight of the top 10 states in terms of manufacturing growth were in the old Confederacy, too.

This is a culture, after all, that gave us both *To Kill A Mockingbird* and "The Dukes of Hazzard."

Politics and race are the two great verities of Southern life. Southerners and outsiders alike usually make two glib assumptions about both subjects: that the old Confederacy is reflexively anti-government and that it is riven with racial divisions. But the truth is more complicated, and if the South truly understood the rhythms of its own culture, it could push the country forward on both counts. True, it won't be easy. Applebome smartly profiles Cobb County, Georgia—Newt Gingrich's district—where conservative sentiment is as thick as kudzu. But Cobb is a top per-capita recipient of federal dollars (third in the nation, in fact, trailing only the districts that host the Pentagon and the Kennedy Space Center). This is a common scene across the South: people inveighing against Washington, muttering—in the most respectable, buttoned-down and bourbon-sipping company—about the Clintons and the liberals. But these folks ought to be reminded of FDR or the new highway out in the county or defense contracts. Then the mood would brighten, and talk would turn to prosperity and good times.

From electrifying the countryside to building airports, interstates, and military bases, it was government, of course, that transformed the Cotton Belt into the Sunbelt. And Southerners, who are rather like the Romans—they worship their ancestors and revere, sometimes too much, the past—instinctively understand that. They ought to be capable of making distinctions about good government and bad government, when a program should go away and when it should be sustained, for they have seen the best and worst of Washington in their backyards. The Tennessee Valley Authority, for example, did its job, but now hangs around, like a poor relation. If the country could come to a similarly judicious attitude about smart public enterprise—and if Southerners could stop being embarrassed by their own debt to government, and lead the way—we would all be much better off.

After all, the most spectacular example of sensible federal action came in the South during the civil rights era, and it represented the nation's most moving piece of shared history since World War II. Mining that experience could force an important change of heart about government generally. Of course, the movement provoked substantial white backlash at the time, and surely the current anti-Washington sentiment owes something to that. But thinking Southerners know that the real secret to the South's economic boom was the epic abolition of Jim Crow. The North should watch its moral high-handedness here: C. Vann Woodward famously documented in *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* the systematic exclusion of blacks from public life in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and other Northern cities in the decades before the Civil War, and as late as the 1930s all of the border states, including Delaware, Maryland, Missouri, and Oklahoma, mandated some forms of segregation. And this was just *legalized* segregation. As Applebome points out, "[Today] blacks and whites certainly deal with one another more intimately and have more shared experience in Selma than in New York City."

The movement was a quintessential Southern story of struggle and redemption, and the guiding force for good was Washington. The same kind of thinking should be applied today to other problems:

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failing schools, the inner cities. It won't be as easy, of course. Courts could strike down segregation and can't very nimbly fix a neighborhood. But government should play some kind of role, and the country could learn from the example of the transformation of Dixie in the 40 years since *Brown vs. Board of Education.*

The South as national leader for good—it is, I admit, an unlikely thought. But given the pull of history, and demographics, it may be inevitable that the South will have the country's fate in its hands. The region dominated the nation once before, in its early years. Southerners authored the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, and for 49 of the republic's first 72 years, a slaveholding Southerner was president of the United States; the Congress and the Supreme Court were heavily Southern. Lincoln ended all that, as he rightly ended so much else. But the region is stirring again. Instead of screwing it up once more by hurling ourselves into the ditch of racism and recrimination, it is essential that grace and generosity of spirit—the fictional South of Atticus Finch, the real South of Ralph McGill—triumph. Southerners have better manners, which isn't just a quaint affectation. We believe, with Jane Austen, that manners are morals.

The task is to take that understanding and apply it not only to private matters but to public ones. If we can do that in the deepest chambers of the old Confederacy, we can do it everywhere. Even Wallace, the old hater, is making the right noises. The end is coming, and he is campaigning for redemption. "Segregation was wrong, wrong," he'll gasp at you, hungry for forgiveness. On the 30th anniversary of the Selma-to-Montgomery march, three decades after Wallace unleashed his troopers on men and women like John Lewis, the old governor joined hands with the Rev. Joseph Lowery and sang "We Shall Overcome." The cynical conversion of a dying old man? Probably. Better than nothing? Certainly. A sign of where the country's headed? Hopefully. ●

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WALTER UPDEGRAVE
"Stacking the Deck"
Money

Updegrave reveals the intimate connections between state legislators and the insurance industry: state insurance commissioners who are ex-presidents of insurance companies or ex-lobbyists for the industry; insurance committee members who are also lawyers in firms that profit from the insurance business; and lawmakers who return to high-paying industry jobs after they end their "public service."

KEVIN CORCORAN
"Pills Fuel Political Donation"
The Times of Northwest Indiana/WISH-TV

This report on the links between drug entrepreneur Richard Deer and Indiana's Republican gubernatorial candidate Stephen Goldsmith reminds us why money and politics remain an ugly coupling. Deer's company, BDI, markets the controversial over-the-counter asthma drug Mini-Thin. Teenagers get high off Mini-Thin, which is why regulators are considering making it available only by prescription. Deer happens to be Goldsmith's largest in-state political contributor; if Goldsmith wins, he will appoint the pharmacy board that oversees BDI.

TOM JOHNSON & JUDY PEET
"The Forgotten River"
The Star Ledger

From New Jersey's interior comes an environmental success story. The Passaic River was once the second-most polluted river in the nation—its fish inedible, its water unswimmable. Two reporters travel the river's length to show how environmental clean-up funds and a massive volunteer effort turned much of the river around.

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Political Booknotes

Soldiers' Stories

By Thomas E. Ricks

READING DAVID HACKWORTH'S new book is like spending an evening drinking in a bar with a smart, talkative U.S. Army sergeant. You'll learn a lot. You'll have some fun. And, when he turns belligerent, you might get a punch or two thrown at you.

HAZARDOUS DUTY: America's Most Decorated Living Soldier Reports from the Front and Tells It the Way It Is
By David H. Hackworth
William Morrow, $27

I was prepared to trash this book. If anyone has demonstrated that it is possible to stuff 10 pounds of bull into a five-pound bag, it is David Hackworth—or, as it says at the top of every other page in this book, "Colonel David H. Hackworth." When he blows, he blows hard. "One burst from an AK-47 or an incoming RPG could turn the Grungies into colanders and anyone in them to salad dressing," he writes at one point in his inquiry into the October 1993 firefight in Mogadishu that killed 18 American soldiers. And I laughed at his description of his "Deep Throat" source in Haiti who dished the inside skinny. I'm pretty sure from his description that this inside man was the same guy I and a dozen other journalists interviewed over beers in the garden of the Hotel Montana, up in the plush suburbs overlooking Port-au-Prince. It is unlikely that there was more than one garrulous Canadian advising the Haitian junta and talking to reporters.

But once you get past the swaggering persona, Hackworth, who retired spectacularly from the army 25 years ago, makes a lot of sense. He is at his best when he is talking about, and talking to, the soldier in the trenches. Listen to him describe the first U.S. troops in Bosnia in December 1995, from the 1st Brigade of the Army's 1st Armored Division: "During the time I spent with them I never saw a soldier out of uniform, a dirty weapon, an unalert warrior, and I never heard a leader raise his voice." I was there with those troops, and that is a better description than I was able to write at the time. It hits the key points of how soldiers behave, and how they are commanded. I was aware that the 1st Brigade, commanded by Col. Gregory Fontenot, had about the most crackerjack chain of command I'd ever seen. Hackworth's precise description reflects his knowledge of what is important to notice in a military operation. He is similarly good at pointing out how badly run the U.S. 10th Mountain Division was when it was in Haiti, undercutting its morale.

He also hits the nail on the head in underscoring the single greatest scandal in our military, the continuing imbalance between the resources devoted to acquiring high-tech gear and the resources devoted to improving the lot of the infantryman. Stealth bombers (costing $2 billion a pop) and the like get all the attention, while the soldiers who actually carry out most of today's missions tote outdated equipment. Our satellites can see license plates from outer space, but our mine detectors can't see the mines under our soldiers' feet. It amazed me in Bosnia last winter that every reporter wore better body armor than did the American troops they were covering. (Ours, available from the store that outfits the Washington, D.C. police, can stop some bullets; theirs really only protect against shrapnel and other bits of flying metal, hence the name "flak jacket.") My boots were warmer than Col. Fontenot's; CNN's communications capabilities, in the house the network rented on the bank of the Sava River, also outclassed the Colonel's.

Given his bias for the grunt down in the mud, Hackworth also provides a surprisingly fair infantryman's assessment of Colin Powell, who is his polar opposite in military culture, the staff weenie who never strayed too far from the flagpole: "General Colin Powell is a fine political officer with a distinguished career as a military bureaucrat. . . . He was never a romping, stomping, war-fighting general." Powell may disagree with that assessment—but not the soldiers out on the pointy end of the stick.

But then it is as if another round of drinks arrives at the table, and your drinking buddy's focus wavers. The further Hackworth gets from the front lines, the less sure his touch becomes. His media criticism, for example, is perplexing. There is a lot to criticize, but he misses the target altogether when he calls for more stories about Pentagon spending on projects like the Milstar satellite, the early Bradley fighting vehicle, and the B-1 bomber. As I recall, a generation of Pentagon reporters put bread on their tables precisely by grinding out encyclopedic stories about those projects. His recommendations on large-scale defense policy are just as tired. "Inter-service rivalry" is a familiar target, and he fires at it predictably, as have a dozen previous authors in rip-the-lid-off-the-Pentagon books. But inter-service rivalry is underappreciated. It may produce redundancies (which, in fact, aren't always bad in war), but it also introduces an element of competition and truth-telling in the services. The Marines really do operate differently than—and frequently better than—the Army. And the Navy really quietly believes that its radar can detect more of the Stealth bomber than the Air Force lets on.

Hackworth is at his blowziest in the chapter on his role in the suicide earlier this year of Adm. Mike Boorda, who at the time was the chief of the Navy. His self-defense rings hollow, and his words grow mushy: "[H]is suicide was a tragedy. His career needed no embellishment. He should have been as proud of the Navy as it was of him." Hackworth doesn't do himself or his employer, *Newsweek* magazine, any good when he casually charges that *Newsweek*'s regular defense correspondent, John Barry, "had been so busy practicing hey-let's-do-lunch journalism that it is small wonder he didn't discover or develop the Boorda story himself." He uses the episode to lecture

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MEDIA & POLITICS

THE C-SPAN REVOLUTION
By
Stephen Frantzich and John Sullivan

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Barry on the job of a reporter. Then, three pages later, he portrays himself asking Sen. Sam Nunn and senior Army officers to promote an Army friend that Hackworth considers a true warrior—as if lobbying for promotions were a reporter's proper role.

The fact is that Hackworth isn't a professional journalist, but a gifted amateur. This follows on his military career: He was a "warrior," not a professional soldier who manages the violence of others. There is always a tension between the two in American military culture. The distinction tends to be lost on the general population, especially the political and economic elites who know little and care less about military affairs. But it is important. If Hackworth were a professional soldier, he probably would have been able to look at the big picture more insightfully. At the very least, a professional soldier wouldn't have concluded this book as Hackworth does, with this Tarzan-like chest-pounding: "So be warned, all you Perfumed Princes and Propaganda Poets, all you slick political porkers and weapons makers with your hands in the till. I intend to keep sniffing around like an old coyote, chewing on the Military Industrial Congressional Complex and calling 'em as I see 'em."

THOMAS E. RICKS *is the Pentagon correspondent for* The Wall Street Journal *and the author of the forthcoming book,* Making the Corps.

Southern Fried Politics

By John Egerton

ONE OF THE GREAT drawbacks of writing biography—or so it would seem to me—is the unavoidable necessity of spending huge blocks of time studying your subject, dead or alive. This could get to be tedious. It could be much worse if the person were someone you didn't particularly like, someone whose philosophy and behavior you found reprehensible, and someone who was hostile to your biographical intent. The whole experience could be enough to make you swear off writing forever.

FROM GEORGE WALLACE TO NEWT GINGRICH: Race in the Conservative Counterrevolution, 1963-1994
By Dan T. Carter
Louisiana State University Press, $22.95

All the more reason to admire a scholar such as Dan T. Carter, the Kenan Professor of History at Emory University. For eight years, he labored on a biography of Alabama governor and presidential aspirant George C. Wallace, who to this day has not deigned to speak to the professor. If anything, Carter's admittedly more liberal proclivities and Wallace's cold shoulder made the author bend every effort to be thorough, fair, and honest in his portrayal of the foremost segregationist of the mid-20th century.

First in a full-length biography and now in the series of lectures which comprise his current book, Carter has taken such a lucid and precise measure of the man and his times that a portrait of much greater depth and breadth emerges: not just Wallace and Alabama and the segregationist South, but the sweep and substance of a half-century of American politics.

Carter's *The Politics of Rage: George Wallace, the Origins of the New Conservatism, and the Transformation of American Politics* received critical acclaim when it was published in 1995 and won the Robert F. Kennedy Book Award earlier this year. Now, in his Walter Lynwood Fleming lectures in Southern History, delivered in 1991 at Louisiana State University, he succinctly summarizes the rise and fall of Wallace as a regional and national figure and goes on to document the Alabamian's profound influence not only on Southern Republicrats but also on Presidents Ronald Reagan and George Bush, House Speaker Newt Gingrich, and the conservative counterrevolution of the past 30 years.

While noting the significant differences between economic and social conservatives, particularly in regard to the politics of race and gender, Carter nonetheless asserts that the two streams "ultimately joined in the political coalition that reshaped American politics from the 1970s through the mid-1990s." What's more,

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though most Republican conservatives try to ignore George Wallace "in fervent hope that he will quietly disappear out the back door of our historical memory," Carter finds his fingerprints all over the party dossier: on Barry Goldwater's vote against the Civil Rights Act of 1964, on Richard Nixon's subtle manipulation of the busing issue, on Reagan's genial demolition of affirmative action, on Bush's use of the Willie Horton commercials, on Gingrich's demonization of welfare mothers.

"The new rhetoric—carefully tested and marketed by political consultants—may lack Wallace's visceral edge (and wit)," Carter declares, "but it reflects the same callous political exploitation of the raw wounds of racial division in our country."

The first two of Carter's four LSU lectures are the most incisive, if only because they offer a perspective on the 1960s and '70s that can't yet be had on the more recent decades. Particularly fascinating and compelling are the depictions of Wallace as a master political craftsman in his national campaigns for president, and the extent to which Wallace and Nixon viewed each other with fear and hatred—and grudging respect—throughout their years as adversaries.

Carter vividly describes a Wallace rally at Madison Square Garden in October 1968, at which a throng of "20,000 of the faithful, the largest indoor political gathering in New York City since a Franklin Roosevelt speech in 1936," roared in anger with the pugilistic Alabama governor as he delivered "a performance that was palpably sexual, bizarrely blending the sacred—God, Mother, Country—and the profane, with calls for violence and retribution" against the U.S. Supreme Court and all "demonstrators" and "anarchists."

Behind the scenes of Nixon's victory in 1968 and his subsequent handling of racial and social issues, Carter says, there was always the specter of Wallace lurking over his right shoulder. In the 1972 campaign, hints of a deal between the two adversaries accompanied a Wallace return to the Democratic Party from his previous candidacy as a third-party renegade. Not only was that move "a major factor in the collapse of the Democrats" in 1972, says Carter; it could have led to Wallace's nomination had he not been crippled by a would-be assassin's bullet. Even so, the Alabamian single-handedly "gave shape and focus to a whole range of social issues...that would come to dominate the rhetoric of American politics."

With the permanently wounded Wallace out of the political picture at last, Nixon and the Republicans were momentarily free (before Watergate) "to build a 'New American Majority' on the solid foundation of the conservative South," Dan Carter asserts. And so they did, and so it is that George Wallace can be declared the real father of contemporary Republicanism in Dixie.

More than that, as Carter shows in his last two essays, many of the conservative ideas, issues, and tactics of the 1980s and '90s that have worked so well for Reagan, Bush, Pat Buchanan, and the new congressional majorities are traceable to the Machiavellian mind of the little man from Alabama.

Wallace wouldn't talk to Carter, but he talked to lots of others, and Carter has found them, scoured the record, and painted a full portrait of the man and his legacy that stands as its own indictment.

JOHN EGERTON's *most recent book is* Speak Now Against the Day.

Electric Dreams

By Matthew L. Wald

WHEN CALIFORNIA DECIDED IN 1990 that it would require the production of electric cars, General Motors commissioned an outside firm to build one. This was rather like a meat-and-potatoes host ordering take-out tofu to prepare for the visit of a kooky vegetarian. But as the state stuck to its guns and said that by the 1998 model year auto companies would have to make 2 percent of their cars "zero emission vehicles," GM got serious about the tofu and decided to make its own.

The story of General Motors and its electric car, which is now entering the market in California, is as complicated a love/hate relationship as any in the history of technology and marketing. A company that made itself into the world's largest manufacturer of the internal-combustion engine looks askance at a technology that could replace what is literally the engine of its success. On the other hand, it does not want to be left behind.

Michael Shnayerson, a contributing editor to *Vanity Fair* and *Conde Nast Traveler*, captures a good portion of that conflict in his new book, with a slew of in-depth interviews and some valuable insights. But the book, despite its title, isn't really about the Impact (now the EV-I), or electric cars at all, but about General Motors, which is cast in a somewhat heroic light: It met the engineering challenges not so much of inventing an electric car— that, after all, was done before the turn of the last century—but of manufacturing one by the thousands. The problem with the story as told by Shnayerson is that producing an electric car is something that a company with as many talented engineers as GM *ought* to be able to do. It should be like invading Grenada was for the U.S. Marines.

With California's intentions hard to read (in fact, the state eventually delayed the mandate), and with General Motors lurching from profit to loss and back, the company's Impact program was inconsistent, moving in fits and starts. Shnayerson quotes one GM executive who called the EV (electric vehicle) development program "a rogue cell hidden from the corporate immune system." We'll have to take his word for it; those within the company who wanted to kill the program do not show up in any detail in the book.

THE CAR THAT COULD: The Inside Story of GM's Revolutionary Electric Vehicle
By Michael Shnayerson
Random House, $25

Worse, *The Car That Could* misses much of the context in which GM's work was done. It was an era of tremendous progress in the field, much of it outside the workshops of General Motors, and sometimes outside GM's ken, too. The company, for example, continued to complain that it couldn't make its batteries perform in cold climates, while Solectria, a tiny challenger, solved the problem on the Geo Metros

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it was converting to electricity. It was also a period in which natural gas and methanol vehicles, once hailed as quicker, less complicated alternatives than the electric car would be, seemed to rise and then fade in the technological horse race. Some of the reasons have bearing on electrics, such as the public's perception of the future price and availability of gasoline. And it was a time that encompassed the Persian Gulf war and renewed concern about oil imports. Oil dependence is not why the Air Resources Board wanted electric vehicles, but along with carbon dioxide buildup (another problem that electric cars could ameliorate), it is a major reason that enthusiasts give for electrics. We don't read anything about these issues.

The meat of the book, the transition from a one-of-a-kind show car to a mass-produceable version, is the story of a real achievement. But we never find out if this is "The Car That Will"—sell, that is. GM went through an unprecedented marketing test for the Impact, making 50 copies and offering them free to drivers around the country, as a field test and a test of the attitudes of potential buyers. It asked them, among other things, how the car limited their driving, and how much they would be willing to pay. The book jacket assures us that Shnayerson had "unlimited access." But if he knows what the test drivers said, he does not share it with us. We don't even find out how many GM hopes to market.

Throughout the book, GM gets credit for reviving the electric car, a technology that has mostly languished since before World War I. Perhaps Shnayerson is too kind. For example, he notes that GM has also begun producing an electric version of its Chevy S-10 pickup. It would be instructive to hear of the internal debate on how GM decided to sell the Geo Metro or the S-10 to Solectria, which has been buying both and discarding their gasoline engines, transmissions, and exhaust systems to convert them to electricity. Solectria wanted GM to sell them without engines, but GM never would.

Shnayerson does give some interesting hints of GM's relationship with its closest competitors, Chrysler and Ford. On the electric car, Chrysler's approach to regulatory compliance was, loosely stated, "The dog ate my homework." Ford was more earnest but less apt, sticking to the sodium-sulfur battery, which it invented 30 years ago but hasn't made practical. To some extent GM seems to have plowed ahead simply because its Detroit brethren did so badly.

But Shnayerson misses the other side, the paradigm question, which was clearly still an open one when his story began. How would electric cars enter the market? As an offshoot of a related industry, the way Sony and Phillips, television manufacturers, moved into VCRs, or as a new industry? Can GM move into the related industry of recharging electric cars by marketing fast charging stations to shopping centers and office buildings? Has the company thought that far ahead? We still have little idea after reading this book.

MATTHEW L. WALD *covers transportation for* The New York Times.

Retirement Plans

By Paul Hewitt

THERE ARE MOMENTS IN THE HISTORY of great nations when a single choice can mean the difference between alternative futures—one bright, the other dark." So writes Peter G. Peterson in his wake-up call to politicians on the dangers of merely representing, rather than leading, an electorate woefully unprepared for the age-wave soon to overtake American society.

In his latest book, *Will America Grow Up Before It Grows Old?*, Peterson gives voice to a growing anxiety that we are fast approaching the day when, if we do not act, we will pay a terrible price. As we have come to expect from his writings, he carefully documents how well-meaning and popular old-age benefit promises have launched the American economy on a perilous journey into darkness. Yet in the past, Peterson's recommendations have centered mainly on balancing the budget. This time he makes a comprehensive, urgent case for a savings policy—an expansion of government's regulatory powers in the interests of protecting posterity.

"Graying means paying," Peterson observes. Indeed, much of this fact-laden book is devoted to disproving claims that America can wriggle out of its

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demographic future. As the baby boomers retire over the next three decades, America will experience a sustained rise in consumption by persons who no longer produce as much as they consume. Finance this consumption with deficits, he warns, and the economy will collapse amid soaring interest rates and debt service costs. Finance it with taxes, and you will drastically lower the living standards of middle-class families. In the process, taxes will crowd out savings and investment, and with it our ability to compete in world markets.

WILL AMERICA GROW UP BEFORE IT GROWS OLD?
By Peter G. Peterson
Random House, $21

Instead, Peterson calls on Congress to replace the "vicious cycle" of debt and dependency with a new "virtuous cycle" of saving and self-denial. In the broad sweep of things this concept is hardly radical. He reminds us that it is essentially the same model being followed by our new competitors, the fast-growing economies of Southeast Asia—not to mention our own forbears.

But by Washington standards, his proposals are bold. Among his prescriptions: a mandatory savings plan that initially supplements and then gradually replaces the unfunded Social Security program; a consumed-income levy that taxes what people spend, not what they earn; and pared-down, means-tested health benefits that stop lavishing the most expensive care on those at the very end of life.

Yet when it comes to the politics of change, Peterson is no bomb-thrower. He does denounce "the unspoken truce between 'supply siders' opposed to any tax increase, and 'liberals' opposed to any cut in domestic spending" who settle their differences by borrowing. He castigates the special interests that flooded the Kerrey-Danforth Entitlements Commission with 350,000 postcards before it considered a single recommendation. But confrontation isn't his style. Instead, Peterson appeals to the sensibilities of decent people. He calls for public education, and for the vast, dependent middle class to become part of the solution.

But however he may have intended it, this book isn't really written for the vast middle class. Implicit in Peterson's sometimes technical, sometimes rambling narrative is a personal appeal for Congress to act first and explain later. Aided by the superb research of Neil Howe and Richard Jackson, he combines the latest official data and studies on the future of the budget and the economy to systematically explode the myths used to rationalize the unsustainable age-based welfare state. He offers clear-headed advice on what must be done, and why. These are the arguments Congress must use not only to educate the public on what must be done, but to justify its actions afterward. More than anything, *Will America Grow Up* is about leadership.

Over the years, no public figure has more consistently sounded the alarm over the financial devastation that awaits if we fail to prepare for the baby boomers' retirement. One of Wall Street's leading investment bankers, Peterson is a very wealthy guy. He and his children are likely to do fine in any future our policy makers create, bright or dark. Yet he rarely misses an opportunity to use his formidable intellect and powers of persuasion to further the twin causes of economic growth and generational equity. Would that all

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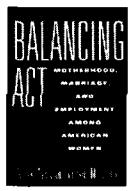

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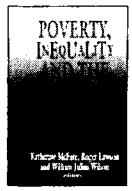

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PAUL HEWITT *is the executive director of the National Taxpayers Union Foundation.*

Good Presidents, Bad Presidents

by Norman Ornstein

WHAT MAKES A GOOD PRESIDENT good, and a lousy president lousy? Bill Clinton has certainly been thinking about this question as he contemplates a second term. In an interview with *The Washington Post*, he talked about the fact that most great presidents, like Lincoln, Wilson, and FDR, developed their reputations conquering crises like great wars or depressions; only a few, like Teddy Roosevelt, managed to show greatness without that kind of challenge.

As a student of history, Clinton will welcome historian Robert Dallek's new book, which surveys all 41 American presidents to examine the qualities that made and unmade their reputations. Dallek identifies five characteristics common to successful presidents—vision, pragmatism, consensus, charisma, and trust—and looks at each one in terms of presidents who have had them and presidents who have not. While many of the superstars in presidential history earned their acclaim for their responses to crises, he says, "Some of our most successful presidents were those who converted relatively lesser dangers into political capital. Moreover, they did not allow themselves to be overwhelmed by unanticipated problems, but rather seized upon them as opportunities to lead the nation through a time of troubles." As examples, he cites Jefferson and the Louisiana Purchase, Andrew Jackson's role in democratizing American politics, and JFK's handling of the Cuban Missile Crisis.

HAIL TO THE CHIEF: The Making and Unmaking of American Presidents
By Robert Dallek
Hyperion, $22.95

Dallek argues that virtually every successful president has not only articulated a larger vision, but coupled it with pragmatism—an understanding that political accomplishments often require flexible means. "Pragmatists without vision are seen as opportunists," he writes. "Pragmatists with vision are seen as statesmen, or at the very least, good politicians." Yet even successful presidents with vision and pragmatism have made huge mistakes—Wilson with the Treaty of Versailles, FDR with court-packing, Truman with the Korean War.

Dallek also makes the case that successful presidents don't necessarily need huge mandates to start, but must understand where political consensus is or can be reached, then exploit or create it. Unsuccessful presidents often overstep their mandates. Successful presidents have personalities that either demonstrate charisma or that embody American dreams or currents. He notes that Teddy Roosevelt "made his mark on the White House not simply by turning himself into a celebrity whom millions of Americans admired, but by identifying himself with a progressive and romantic nationalism that promised to bind the country together and make it a force for law and order on the world scene."

Hail to the Chief is solid, well-written popular history. Dallek competently covers the historical waterfront, focusing in greater detail on some of the more celebrated and vilified presidents. His framework is not deeply systematic, but his categories are sensible. The history buff may learn little new about the presidents, but he will profit from Dallek's approach, and perhaps have fun trying to read the book from Bill Clinton's perspective. Are there lessons here from which this president can profit? If he makes it to a second term and never faces the equivalent of a depression or a Civil War, can he find the means to craft a memorable presidency? Can he find enough of a vision, or create enough of an atmosphere of trust, to go down in history alongside his two Roosevelt role models? *Hail to the Chief* may raise these questions without providing any neat answers, but it is worth reading nonetheless.

NORMAN ORNSTEIN *is a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute.*

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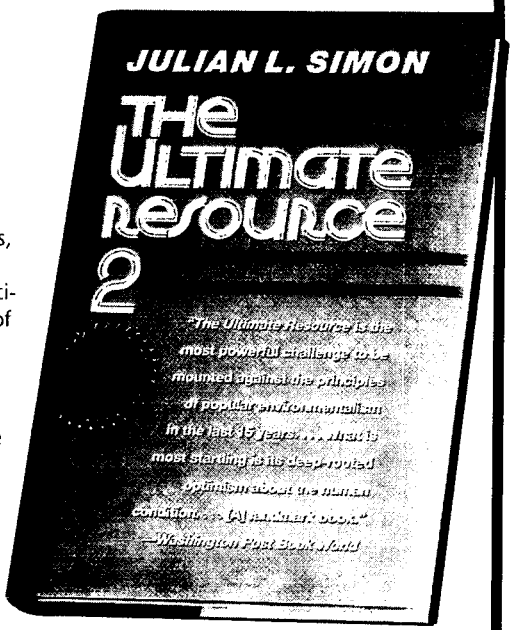
The Big Picture

The Ultimate Resource 2

Julian L. Simon



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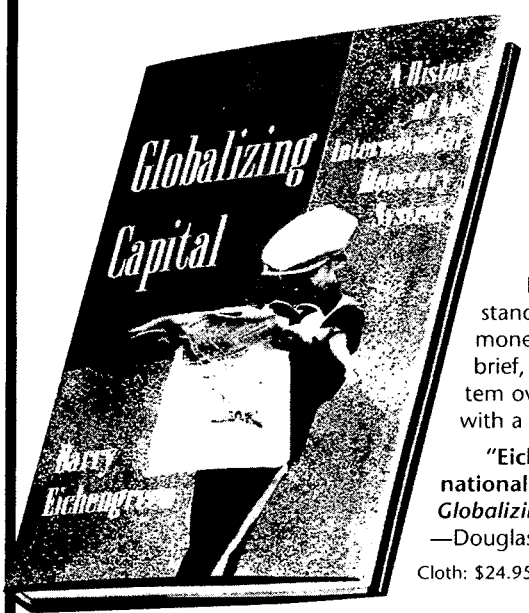

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